

Global Issues in Pharmaceutical Marketing

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It is easy to say that the pharmaceutical industry, or Big Pharma, is unique. It is easy to say because without data, anything one might say about the industry might be believed. That is one of the problems in discussing pharmaceutical marketing. It may be due to the diverse forces which comprise and surround the industry. One force is medical research which aims at benefitting mankind. Another is corporate which has profit as at least one of its goals. Still another takes the role of consumer advocate and includes government and other organizations. The players have different objectives and too often embrace the advocacy posture to support their case with their preferred arguments. It would be helpful to encounter some view that is balanced and based on the body of existing evidence. *Global Issues in Pharmaceutical Marketing* provides just that.

Books and articles which focus on the industry fall into a few categories. One is the academic tome comprising a series of articles which may or may not follow a coherent theme. They are referenced and often refereed and may be the grist for doctoral programs. They certainly provide professors with important currency in the form of a demonstration of job performance: research. Another type is the collection of articles arranged to form a text. These provide an overview of pharma helpful for students. A third type is directed at the public and may be written as an exposé or as a vehicle to support a point of view. Each may lack some element like a firm foundation of research provided by refereed journal articles and third-party facts. Alternatively, they may not provide a comprehensive overview of the industry and the forces that affect it.

Global Issues in Pharmaceutical Marketing is not a book that falls neatly into one of the previous categories. It examines the pharmaceutical industry comprehensively and provides a research-based, balanced perspective. The author is a respected academic with significant marketing and product management experience in the industry. That combination of education and experience helps her provide a true picture of the industry and its challenges. There is also an element of courage here. It would be safe and easy to parrot the typical industry descriptors without covering the potential problems that exist.

Contents

The book is clear and the writing style is aimed at real people. It is also forward-looking. For example, the US pharmaceutical market is the largest. However, the global market offers increasing potential and is covered well. Each of the 12 chapters covers an important part of pharmaceutical marketing and together they form an up-to-date image of the industry, the forces that affect it and the challenges that it faces. It is noteworthy that while easy-to-read, each of the chapters is dense, covering each topic in depth. The book starts with the introductory look at the industry's structure and its effect on marketing performance and product innovation. It then covers the nature and scope of the environmental forces and health care organizations to provide the context of pharma. The topic progression is logical and includes a detailed treatment of global marketing and branding. It covers promotion in the industry in a stage-by-stage fashion from traditional promotion, to digital communications to physicians, as well as direct to consumer advertising, and consumer-to-consumer use of social media. There is also coverage of industry self-regulation and the treatment is excellent and informative.

The last two chapters demonstrate the author's deep experience and understanding of pharma marketing. She details the potential of emerging markets and the over-the-counter market. Marketers will find this valuable.

After leading the reader through an in-depth look at pharmaceutical marketing, the author tackles the elephant in the room, the problems that the industry faces. She paints a clear picture of the tapestry of problems that have tarnished industry image over time and offers some well-reasoned prescriptions to fix what is wrong.

One of my reactions is that if the US gun control issue had a similarly crafted, balanced, fact-based perspective, the two sides might come together and perhaps solve the problem.

Global Issues in Pharmaceutical Marketing is a valuable tool for lobbyists, politicians, journalists, students, professors and those in the industry. Its usefulness as a primer for new hires and students of the industry is clear. However, its thought-provoking coverage will be helpful to decision-makers as they chart the course of their organizations.

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