**Risks due to the Existence of Online Pharmacies**

- Increase in counterfeit / falsified medicines
- Increased purchase medicine for non-medical reasons
- Illegal business facilitated by in gaps legislation states and enforcement difficulties
- Increase in rogue online pharmacies
- Information of poor quality
- The public neither sufficiently informed about the risks of purchasing medication online nor able to make a distinction between good and bad information

**Outcomes can endanger the public health**

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**Main Recommendation**

To establish international multi-level cooperation to develop an international **code of conduct** specifically for online pharmacies, and a **logo** enabling the public to easily recognize online pharmacies respecting this code.

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**Advantages of an International Code of Conduct**

- International harmonization
- Minimum requirements which all online pharmacies should comply with
- People can easily recognize pharmacies respecting the code through a logo
- Soft law approach, which can follow easier the developments of the market
- Specifically focused on whole concept of online pharmacies, not only one part

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**Current Regulation of Online Pharmacies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Status of Online Pharmacies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Only brick-and-mortar pharmacies can operate an online pharmacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>Falsified medicines directive: · Sales can be reserved solely to pharmacists · Logo to recognize legal online pharmacies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Online pharmacies are prohibited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Since a few years, online pharmacies are accepted under certain conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Online pharmacies are allowed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Online pharmacies are prohibited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Online pharmacies are allowed. Logo to recognize trustworthy pharmacies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Ryan Haight Act · Requires a valid prescription · Sufficient info on the website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Common Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Licensed Pharmacies</th>
<th>Valid Prescriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respecting legal restrictions</td>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Advertisement Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good-quality information</td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Steps**

- Verifying
- Auditing
- Recommending
- Revising
- Enforcing

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**Current Initiatives* of Evaluation and Verification Mechanisms - Examples**

- Canadian International Pharmacy Association (CIPA®)
- HON Code of Conduct (HONcode)
- Internet Pharmacy Verification
- Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites

*The mentioned initiatives are solely examples and do not imply any affiliation or endorsement by the Health On the Net Foundation (except for its own logo and seal). HON does not make any representation or warranty regarding any of the products or services provided by the organizations behind these initiatives, nor does it imply that these initiatives are affiliated with each other. Copyright to use the logos has been obtained.

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The Health On the Net Foundation (HON) is a not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization dedicated to the promotion of transparent and trustworthy health information on the Internet. HON offers tools and expertise, as well as specialized search engines, to the growing online community of healthcare consumers and information providers. In order to keep the Foundation’s services up-to-date, the HON Team aims to identify trends in Internet usage for health purposes and conducts surveys like this one. The HON Code of Conduct, known as the HONcode, is a proactive way to promote trustworthy health-related websites; it is a standardized certification verifiable in real time, and it was established by reaching a consensus among webmasters, citizens, and medical experts.

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HON – Developing practical ethical solutions to find and promote trustworthy health information on the Internet since 1996.