



Consumer Protection Features and Professional Practice Standards of VIPPS Program

- ◆ The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites™ (VIPPS®) program has been accrediting Internet pharmacies since 1999. More than 12,000 brick and mortar pharmacies are represented by the Internet pharmacies currently accredited through the VIPPS program.
- ◆ VIPPS Seal informs consumers, regulators, and others that the Internet pharmacy holds a valid license, the facility has been inspected, and its operations meet stringent practice standards.
- ◆ NABP confirms that VIPPS-accredited pharmacies authenticate prescriptions and verify the identity of patients and prescribers. VIPPS standards prohibit dispensing prescriptions resulting from an online consultation without a pre-existing patient-prescriber relationship that has included an in-person physical examination. To meet these standards, VIPPS pharmacies implement practices such as:
 - Verifying prescribers' Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) license and/or state controlled substance license;
 - Asking patients to provide a medication history and medical information and contacting patients to evaluate the appropriateness of prescribed medications;
 - Communicating with patients and prescribers to verify prescriptions and the basis for the patient/prescriber relationships;
 - Utilizing information databases and online tools to verify patients' and prescribers' addresses;
 - Maintaining a record of questionable doctors and/or Web sites that offer prescription medications based solely upon Internet or telephonic questionnaires or consultations;
 - Declining to fill prescriptions faxed, e-mailed, or transmitted via a Web site by patients.
- ◆ VIPPS receives numerous complaints from consumers and consumer advocacy groups concerning fraud and possible counterfeit medications dispensed by questionable Internet pharmacies. Staff reviews consumer reports; counsels consumers who have been defrauded or have received suspicious medications from rogue online pharmacies; and forwards information to appropriate state boards of pharmacy and federal regulatory authorities.
- ◆ Through various educational initiatives, VIPPS has informed consumers, government bodies, and others on the perils of purchasing from unknown, unlicensed, or unprofessionally operating Internet pharmacies. NABP has worked with the Food and Drug Administration to create brochures and public service announcements warning consumers about the dangers of buying medications online: www.fda.gov/buyonlineguide/brochureHiRez.pdf.
- ◆ NABP has a long history of collaborating with state and federal regulators to investigate and shut down rogue online pharmacies. Staff has conducted drug buys from questionable Internet pharmacies, worked with boards of pharmacy and states' attorneys to identify the Web sites and the brick and mortar pharmacies dispensing the medications, and forwarded the results to regulators. In addition, NABP has provided guidance and expert testimony to regulators who have investigated and prosecuted disreputable Internet pharmacies and their operators.

