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**Asia**

**Pak a dumping ground of foreign drugs**

Islamabad | August 19, 2006 5:07:34 PM IST

In the absence of effective rules and regulations on the sale and consumption of drugs in Pakistan, foreign drug suppliers have flooded the country with expensive mental and psychiatric drugs, which people are consuming in great numbers without getting any perceptible relief.

A report prepared by a civil society organisation "The Network" said that people were incurring heavy monetary losses and the supply of drugs was only serving the doctors and the manufacturers of such medicines.

Multinational drug companies have picked Pakistan as a favourite spot for treating patients with mental and psychiatric disorders, reported the Daily Times, and added that the sale of 'psychotropic' drug in the country was to the tune of Rs three billion annually.

The report further said that the sale of drugs categorised as 'nootropics' (brain stimulants) was worth Rs 187.6 million.

Psychiatric experts in the country say that there was a perfect nexus between the foreign pharmaceutical companies and domestic physicians, which facilitated the supply of such drugs. They say that there was an absence of regulation of medical practice or drug prescribing and dispensing, and the companies and physicians were free to act at their own will.

"The pharmaceutical companies and physicians have a well-established symbiotic relationship in Pakistan, not unlike that in many other countries. However, with little or no regulation of medical practice or drug prescribing and dispensing, companies and physicians are free to act as they deem fit. Malpractice litigation against doctors is unheard of. Pharmaceutical companies have therefore targeted psychiatrists aggressively," said Dr Murad Musa Khan, a psychiatry professor in Aga Khan University at Karachi. (ANI)

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