

Bangladesh doctors urge Viagra production halt

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Bangladeshi doctors Wednesday asked the government to halt permits for Viagra to be mass produced for the domestic market, fearing it could lead to the anti-impotence drug becoming available over the counter.

The government's Drug Control Committee recently granted licences to more than a dozen companies to make and market sildenafil citrate—better known as Viagra—in two forms, overturning a decade-long policy.

But the Bangladesh Medical Association, which represents the nation's 32,000 doctors, protested the decision, worried that the drug would effectively become available over the counter to people for whom it could carry [health risks](#).

"We want the government to cancel the licences because the drug, if it isn't prescribed by specialists, can seriously undermine [public health](#)," its general secretary Sharfuddin Ahmed said.

The association will hold an emergency meeting to discuss the decision next week, Ahmed said, citing fears over a lack of regulation on drug sales.

"Anyone can buy any type of medicine over-the-counter at pharmacies here, even the drugs that are strictly meant to be prescribed by specialist physicians," he said.

The decision to grant licences came after a technical body argued that the number of people suffering from erectile dysfunction was increasing in the country, according to minutes of the committee meeting posted in its website.

At the moment, Viagra is not legally available for anyone in Bangladesh, even with a prescription.

"We have this month allowed some 13 [drug manufacturers](#) to produce sildenafil citrate," Shah Ruhul Amin, an official of the government's drug administration, told AFP.

"Previously some firms were allowed to produce the drug only for export. But this time we've allowed it for the Bangladeshi market as experts opined in favour of its approval," he said.

Doctors have said misuse of sildenafil can lead to [hypertension](#), [heart attack](#), stroke and diabetes.

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