

# Medical charity warns India over patent rules

January 21 2015

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Doctors without Borders on Wednesday warned the Indian government not to bow to US pressure to amend patent regulations that allow millions access to affordable medicines, ahead of a visit by President Barack Obama.

Since India's new right-wing government came to power in May, New Delhi has been under heavy pressure from Washington, prodded by the powerful US pharmaceutical industry, to dilute its strict patent laws.

"The alarm bells should be going off for the new Indian government," said Manica Balasegaram, who heads the medical aid organisation's campaign on drug access.

"The US is pushing India to play by its rules on [intellectual property](#), which we know will lead to medicines being priced out of reach for millions of people."

India says it is fully compliant with World Trade Organization patent rules, but the United States has placed it on a "watchlist" of intellectual property violators.

Indian law stipulates drugs must "satisfy the test of novelty or inventiveness" to win patent protection and does not allow minor tweaks—called "evergreening"—to prolong patent life.

Obama will this week make his second official visit to India, accompanied by a trade delegation that includes the head of PhRMA, a

pharmaceutical trade body.

Western companies say India's powerhouse generics industry and stringent [patent](#) filtering reduce commercial incentives to produce cutting-edge medicines.

But health campaigners say India's vast generics industry is a major supplier of cheap, life-saving drugs to treat diabetes, cancer and other diseases for people cannot afford expensive branded versions.

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Citation: Medical charity warns India over patent rules (2015, January 21) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-01-medical-charity-india-patent.html>

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