

Order Ambien Online Instant Meds Dispatch

United States General Accounting Office

Testimony

Before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations,

Committee on Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

For Release on Delivery

Expected at 9:00 a.m. EDT

Thursday, June 17, 2004

INTERNET PHARMACIES

Ambien, a Prescription Sleep Aid,
Is Available Without a
Prescription Through the
Internet

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GAO-04-892T

PRESCRIPTION NOT NEEDED

 <https://quickmedicalstore.amebaownd.com/> 

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to summarize the results of our investigation of some of the business practices of certain U.S. Internet pharmacies that sold prescription medications without a prescription. Our testimony is part of a larger body of work GAO has performed that is the subject of a report and additional testimony we are releasing today that examines issues

surrounding the availability and safety of prescription drugs sold over the Internet, specifically **Ambien** (zolpidem), and the business practices of certain Internet pharmacies.



We conducted our work from March 2004 through June 2004 in accordance with quality standards for investigations as set forth by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency.

At your request, Mr. Chairman, we attempted to obtain information about the sources of **Ambien** (zolpidem) that we purchased without a prescription from several U.S. online pharmacies. **Ambien** is a prescription sleep medication that is often prescribed for short-term treatment of insomnia. Due to its sedative properties, misuse of **Ambien** has been a concern. We contacted some of the pharmacies that sold us **Ambien** to determine their business practices and find out what role a physician may have played in facilitating our purchase.

In summary, we found that:

1. It is possible to purchase **Ambien** from certain Internet websites without providing a prescription or being examined by a physician.
2. The Internet pharmacies we purchased from charged significantly higher prices for **Ambien** than traditional walk-in pharmacies.
3. These websites appear to cater to individuals seeking easy access to prescription medications, often without any legitimate medical oversight.

Purchases of Prescription Sleep Aid Without Prescriptions

We obtained **Ambien** (zolpidem) from several domestic websites where we placed orders without submitting a prescription or undergoing an examination by a licensed healthcare provider. Many of these websites requested that we complete a questionnaire about our sleep patterns and symptoms, without verifying the accuracy of our responses.

Example Scenario:

On March 1, 2004, a staff member of GAO, posing as a patient, used a pseudonym to place an order for Ambien. The website required the completion of an online questionnaire and offered the option to speak to a doctor via phone to discuss the symptoms of insomnia. However, the consultation was limited to a brief phone call and did not include a comprehensive physical examination or review of medical history.

After completing the online questionnaire and paying a fee, the website sent a prescription for Ambien, allowing the order to be processed. The price for Ambien through these sites was significantly higher than local pharmacies.

Subsequent Investigation

Subsequent to receiving the **Ambien**, a GAO investigator, posing as a relative of the customer, contacted the pharmacy listed on the return address of the package. The pharmacist confirmed that the drug had been sent directly from a partnering physician and explained that the website had a business relationship with the prescribing physician.

We also spoke to the prescribing physician, who admitted to issuing prescriptions for **Ambien** without conducting in-person consultations or confirming a patient's medical history. This type of practice is indicative of a broader issue where some physicians and online pharmacies operate with minimal oversight, putting patients at risk.

Conclusion

Our investigation revealed that it is possible to purchase **Ambien**, a potentially dangerous and addictive sedative, from certain Internet pharmacies without a prescription. These websites operate in a manner that bypasses proper medical evaluations, ultimately profiting from individuals who are potentially misusing or abusing prescription medication. The practices we observed suggest that these sites prioritize convenience and profit over patient safety.



