The need for a global approach to the regulation of Internet Pharmacies
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Abstract
This paper investigates the growing phenomenon of providing drugs sales and medical services over the Internet via Internet/online Pharmacies. It identifies some of the benefits of Internet Pharmacies and discusses some serious concerns for regulators, governments and human society (due to the presence of many illegal online pharmacies). In addition, the paper examines how differences in regulatory provisions governing the operation of Internet Pharmacies in the European Union/United Kingdom (EU/UK) and the United States (US), result in continuing challenges for the world. Some of these differences include regulatory structure, advertising of prescription drugs, online prescribing guidelines, data protection, and public outreach initiatives. In assessing reasons for differences in the two jurisdictions, the paper concludes that these were due to various historic, economic, sociological and political factors. The paper argues that continuing regulatory challenges arise due to the nature of the Internet, jurisdiction issues, economic realities, and a lack of harmonisation of regulatory policy at an international/global level. The paper further argues that a global strategy is needed to regulate online medical services, because of the potential for consequences of a global nature. Finally the paper discusses whether a global strategy can be implemented to address the regulation of Internet Pharmacies.