FURTINET

The State of Pharmaceutical Cybersecurity: 5 Challenges, Gaps, and Priorities

Today's pharmaceutical companies are witnessing unprecedented change driven by a cocktail of competing factors – changing customer demands, increased global competition, pressures to innovate, hybrid working, supply chain disruption, regulation compliance and the need to reduce costs.

As pharmaceutical spending is expected to grow by $367 billion during 2021[1], the market also faces the prospect of increased attention from cyber criminals, attracted both by the value of data and IP but also perceived weaknesses in cyber defenses.

There was a tenfold increase in ransomware in the first six months of 2021[2].

1 Evolving Business Needs

In 2020, pharmaceutical security teams were spread thin, focusing on every aspect of the business, as organizations rapidly evolved to meet remote working needs and market demands. In 2021, the priority has refocused on securing IT networks and business communications for continuity and compliance. While remote working is here to stay, security teams have to increase their urgency in dealing with the proliferation of remote devices accessing IT networks and data.

R&D, global markets and the digital/IT transformation of functions, are the top three strategic business priorities for pharmaceuticals over the next 5 years[3].

2 Data Privacy and Protecting IP

Cybersecurity remains a focal area for organizations in order to protect IP and ensure data privacy.

Pharmaceutical security advisors see a wide range of challenges in protecting the business:

- Lack of resources
- Phishing threats
- Mergers and acquisitions (M&A)
- Slow roll-out
- Sophisticated bad actors
- Monitoring multi-cloud environments

Tactics are toughening, with cyber criminals not just holding data to ransom but also destroying valuable data[4].

3 Aging Operational Technology

One of the top concerns for pharmaceutical companies in 2021 centers on aging Operational Technology (OT). Legacy equipment can be over 20 years old and may no longer be supported with suitable security patches, or even worse, may never have had security at all.

Key concerns for pharmaceuticals include:

- Securing valuable operational IP
- Protecting sensitive data within aging operational technology
- Impact of operational outages on the business

83%
The rise in phishing attacks experienced by life science businesses in 12 months[5].

4 The People Challenge

Remote working is here to stay, with 78% of global pharma CEOs recognizing that the shift to remote collaboration will remain[6].

As well as securing multi connected devices and networks from outside attacks, there is growing concern among pharmaceutical companies about internal threats due to increased remote workers. In 2021, there is a growing emphasis on the need to educate and train pharmaceutical employees better to reduce errors and protect vital secure data.
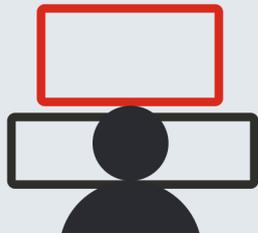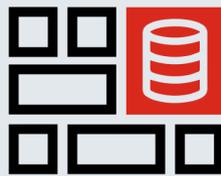
5 Top Priorities for Pharmaceutical Cybersecurity

A common requirement for cybersecurity teams is an advanced method for a better VPN solution and secure network access, particularly for a remote workforce.

Key priorities for pharmaceuticals include:

- Network Security
- Secure access
- Device security
- Business communications
- Endpoint security

68%
of companies have either increased their use of VPN since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic or started using them for the first time.

Learn how Fortinet can safeguard your pharmaceutical organization from the inside out.

Discover How

[1] https://www.iqvia.com/insights/the-iqvia-institute/reports/global-medicine-spending-and-usage-trends-outlook-to-2025
[2] https://www.fortinet.com/blog/industry-trends/fortiguard-labs-threat-landscape-report-highlights-tenfold-increase-in-ransomware
[3] https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/life-sciences/pharmaceutical-industry-trends.html
[4] https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-158/Accenture-2021-Cyber-Threat-Intelligence-Report.pdf
[5] https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/in/pdf/2021/sectorm/cii-kpmg-life-sciences-sector-report-phishing.pdf
[6] https://www.pwc.co.uk/industries/pharmaceuticals-life-sciences/insights/what-does-the-future-of-work-look-like-for-pharma.html
[7] https://openvpn.net/covid-19-fast-tracks-virtualization-openvpn-study-reveals-remote-work-is-the-future/