

Brexit sparks concern over product shortages



Dispensing doctors have continued to do well with their generic buying over the last three months, achieving purchase prices over one Pound cheaper than could pharmacists in April and May, and over three Pounds cheaper in June. However, for parallel imports over the past three months, pharmacists have seen the advantage.

With Brexit around the corner, however, getting stock at any price may become the norm. In June this analysis noted 800 products which were only available as imports; dispensaries are warned that their continuing availability is far from certain as the economic situation changes.

Turning to July, it has been hard to identify many common themes in price changes. The few exceptions are, among the risers, three packs of famciclovir tabs, and two of propranolol, and in the fallers, two packs each of oxybutynin and pioglitazone tabs.

Fallers

A number of companies reduced prices for oxybutynin tabs 5mg x84 in July, despite an increase in the drug tariff for the 56 pack. However, there was a dramatic decrease in the number of market offers: from 46 in June to 27 in July, which may indicate a shortage. The best offers in July below £4.00 were from AAH, Munro, B&S, Numark, Ethigen and DE.

Oxybutynin tabs 2.5mg x56 saw similar price reductions as did the 5mg x84 pack, despite tariff increases from £0.84 in June to £0.96 in July and then £1.11 in August, and a fall in the number of market offers – from 49 in June to 26 in July. Concession prices of £2.23 were granted in both months, suggesting that the regulators had expected a price increase. The best market prices in July below £2.50 were from DE, B&S, Munro, Alliance, OTC Direct, Target, Eclipse and Ethigen.

July's price changes for glimepiride tabs 1mg x30 presented a mixed picture with some price increases but many more reductions. This was accompanied by an increase in the drug tariff from £1.63 in June to £2.90 in July and a decrease in the number of market offerings from 47 in June to 30 in July. The best offers below £2.00 were available from Lexon, AAH, Ethigen, B&S, Numark, Teva and Beta.

Risers

July saw price increases for propranolol tabs 40mg 28 from a number of suppliers as they pushed prices beyond June's top price of £1.00 to as high as £8.39 in July. In total there were 21 offers in July at prices above £1.00, from 12 companies. The best remaining offers below £0.50 were from Lexon, CrossPharma, Eclipse, DE, Beta, Numark, AAH, OTC Direct and Ethigen.

It was a similar picture for the 10mg x28 pack of propranolol tabs: 10 companies made 18 price offers over the June £1.00 price bar, with prices up to £8.39. There was an increase in the English drug tariff at the beginning of August from £0.87 to £1.01, but nothing obvious to give an indication of the cause. The best offers below £0.50 were from Lexon, DE, Eclipse, CrossPharma, Waymade, Cambrian, Beta, Numark, OTC Direct and Ethigen.

Latanoprost eye drops 0.005% x2.5ml saw a significant price rise as the number of prices above £2.00 rose from seven in June to 23 in July. Increases in the English drug tariff – from £1.53 in June, to £1.60 in July and £1.85 in August – were not enough to account for the price increases. There was no indication of availability issues apart from concession pricing: £12.48 in June and £11.53 in July. Good offers below £5.00 were on offer from Teva and AAH in July.