

Rivals stake their claims to losartan

Three manufacturers were ready for a day-one launch of losartan in the UK on 2 March, according to price data obtained by WaveData. Others may have been involved, but wholesalers' price offers do not always identify the product source, pointed out WaveData's managing director Charles Joynson.

Of the three first-starters – Actavis, Sandoz and Teva – only the Icelandic firm felt the need to correct its prices within a few days of launch as Figures 1, 2 and 3 show.

Actavis launched at a 50% discount to the brand price – £8.09 (US\$12.40) to £16.18 for the 25mg and 100mg strengths; £6.40 to £12.80 for the 50mg presentation – but after three days dropped its prices to £6.07 and £4.80, increasing the discounts to 62.5%.

Teva, meanwhile, came in at £6.47 and £5.12, both representing 60% discounts to the trade price of Merck, Sharp and Dohme's Cozaar brand. Initially, at least, the Drug Tariff reimbursement price paid to pharmacists and dispensing doctors for dispensing the generics is the same as the trade price of the off-patent brand. Sandoz, however, undercut Teva with prices of £3.39 and £2.54, both about 80% less than the equivalent brand prices.

Average prices reported by WaveData dropped below those expected from just the three market players are the result of wholesalers also offering their own prices for products from unidentified suppliers.

By the second week after launch, the average prices recorded by WaveData for the three strengths of losartan had already dropped below those of Sandoz. Average prices for losartan 50mg as well as losartan 100mg in 28-tablet packs had already dropped to £1.61.

This almost exactly a 90% discount on the equivalent Cozaar trade price. For the 50mg strength, however, the average price had only fallen to £2.49, very little less than the Sandoz price. With the brand's trade price for this strength less expensive at £12.80, the average generic price offered only just over an 80% discount.

Generic losartan's UK launch was delayed by six months of paediatric exclusivity. The same was not true, however, for the losartan/hydrochlorothiazide combinations that are branded Cozaar Comp in the UK. The brand's supplementary protection certificate (SPC) expired on 14 February. The average price of 28-tablet packs of losartan/hydrochlorothiazide 100mg/25mg was £6.47 on 2 March, when the single-ingredient product was launched. With the equivalent Cozaar Comp price at £16.18 like the losartan-only product, the discount had reached exactly 60%. Similarly, the average price of 28-tablet packs of losartan/hydrochlorothiazide 50mg/12.5 mg was £5.12 compared with £12.80, again offering a 60% discount.

Looking at recent launches of other antihypertensives, Joynson noted the similarity of losartan with ramipril tablets, which were launched by Ivax, Ranbaxy and Teva in January 2004. Figure 4 shows what happened subsequently to the average price of 28-tablet packs of ramipril after Winthrop in February 2004 and Generics UK (now Mylan) in July 2004 also entered the marketplace. Joynson observes: "It took about eight months for launch prices of £10 for 28-tablet packs of ramipril 10mg to drop through the £5 barrier, but it is perhaps too early to forecast the same pace of downward pricing for losartan."

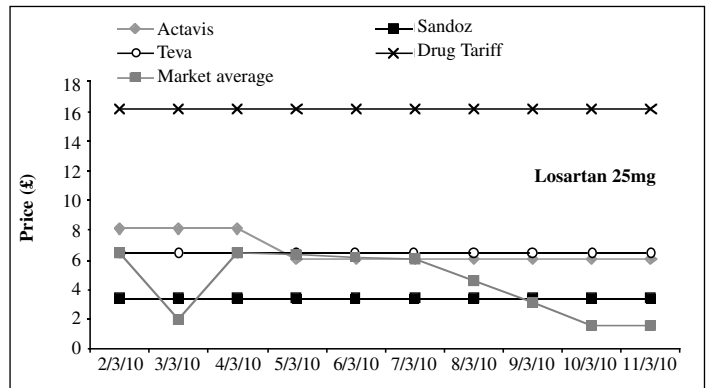


Figure 1: Daily prices for 28-tablet packs of losartan 25mg in the first weeks after generic launch on 2 March (Source – WaveData)

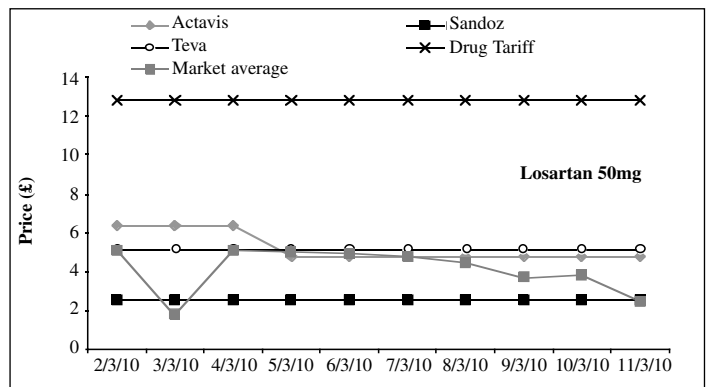


Figure 2: Daily prices for 28-tablet packs of losartan 50mg in the first weeks after generic launch on 2 March (Source – WaveData)

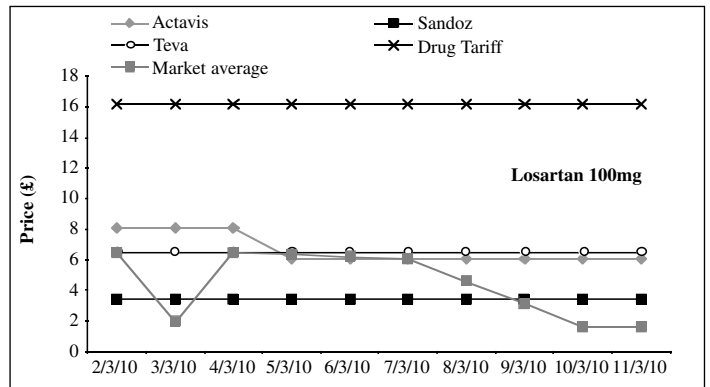


Figure 3: Daily prices for 28-tablet packs of losartan 100mg in the first weeks after generic launch on 2 March (Source – WaveData)

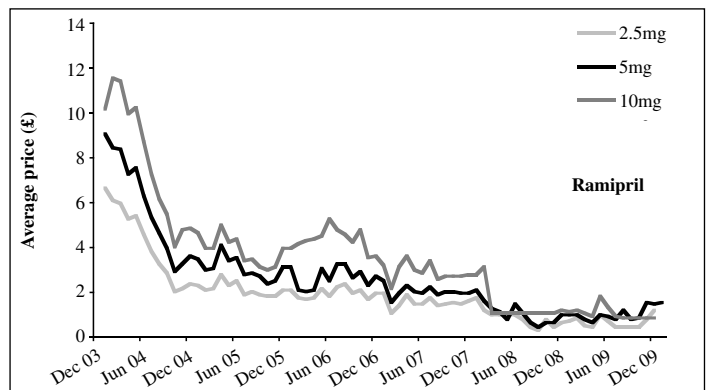


Figure 4: Average monthly prices for different strengths of 28-tablet packs of ramipril following its generic launch in January 2004 (Source – WaveData)

WANT MORE LIKE THIS?

Long-term product price trends or other price analyses are available.

Please specify the product and period of time you would like to investigate and email your request to info@wavedata.co.uk.

■ For further information see www.bppi.co.uk.
Alternatively, contact Charles Joynson at WaveData Limited, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1702 425125.
E-mail: cjoynson@wavedata.co.uk.

