

CHOLESTEROL-LOWERING DRUGS

Fluvastatin fails to offer UK bargains

Fluvastatin has got off to a slow start in the UK with only Teva claiming to have made a day-one generic launch of an equivalent to Novartis' Lescol brand, leaving aside the Swiss firm's own Sandoz subsidiary. Meanwhile, all of Germany's major players have launched the cholesterol-lowerer upon patent expiry.

Teva's UK launch price to independent pharmacists of £12.97 (US\$22.70) for both the 20mg and 40mg strengths offered a mere 15% saving on the brand's equivalent trade price of £15.26 for 28-capsule packs. Sandoz, however, came into the market at £11.45, according to WaveData, which was 25% less than Lescol's price from its parent company (see Figure 1).

A spokesperson for Teva said it had launched on the first practicable day of Tuesday, 26 August, which was after the UK's August holiday weekend. According to GenericsWeb's Scope database, the ingredient patent expired in the UK on Friday, 22 August.

In Germany, meanwhile, Novartis' subsidiary Hexal stole a march on its rivals by launching fluvastatin on Wednesday, 20 August (*Generics bulletin*, 1 September 2008, page 17) with retail prices

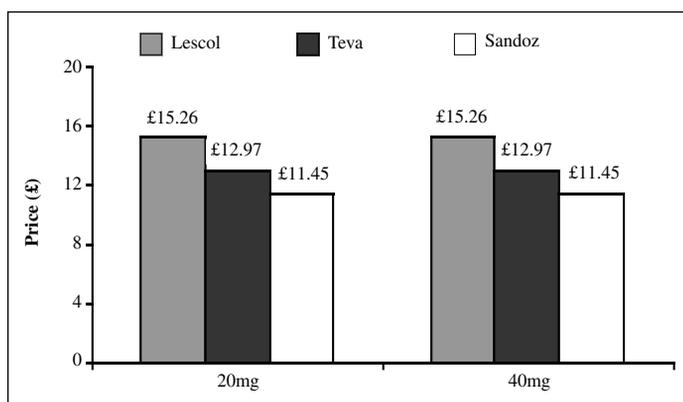


Figure 1: Launch prices of 28-capsule packs of generic fluvastatin in the UK compared with Novartis' Lescol brand (Source – WaveData)

that it said undercut those of its parent by 22%. Unlike in the UK, however, all of Hexal's rivals soon joined it, with Stada launching the following week on Monday, 25 August.

Stada's direct-selling Aliud subsidiary introduced fluvastatin on 1 September, while Betapharm, Ratiopharm and its affiliate AbZ, and Sandoz' subsidiary 1A Pharma had also obtained price listings. Hexal and Stada are offering the two fluvastatin strengths at identical retail prices in Germany, which undercut the respective reference prices by between 8% and 21%. Packs of 30, 50 and 100 caps of fluvastatin 20mg from Hexal and Stada cost €12.21 (US\$17.18), €14.13, and €19.16, while those of the 40mg strength are €14.20, €17.59 and €26.51.

What is not clear is why there appear to be more active players in Germany than in the UK, where a generic price discount of just 15% for a major molecule at patent expiry has not been experienced in recent times. Even the specialist bicalutamide prostate cancer drug has started off at brand discounts of more than 60% (see page 14).

GenericsWeb's Pipeline Selector notes Winthrop for one has UK approvals for fluvastatin, but the company has not been identified directly to date in WaveData's price information. The relatively high UK prices of generic fluvastatin currently are clearly related to the number of active players, but this may change over the next few weeks if more firms take the plunge. **G**