

Fresh bargains were sparse in February

Glancing up and down the lowest-price columns of all three of the tables below, it is clear that there were few fresh bargains for independent pharmacists and dispensing doctors in February. For many of the products listed, especially in Figure 1, there were no changes at all in their lowest prices compared with a month earlier.

One of the exceptions was four-tablet packs of alendronate 70mg, whose falling prices indicate both excess capacity in the market and a commodity status. Similar falls of 19% in the average price and 14% in the lowest price reflect a general price movement downwards by all of the generics players in this market.

At just £0.51 (US\$0.73) on average, alendronate 70mg could be bought in the trade for £1.00 a pack below the reimbursement price in the Drug Tariff of £1.60. This gave pharmacists a 68% profit margin

on the drug. Compared with Merck Sharp & Dohme's Fosamax brand price of £22.80, however, the average generic discount was 98%.

But at least one supplier was asking only £0.24 for a once-weekly alendronate pack. That represented an 85% profit margin for pharmacists based on the reimbursement price and a staggering 99% discount on the brand price. The day cannot be far away in the UK when some generics suppliers are offering alendronate for free on orders for more profitable lines.

Ondansetron, by contrast, still has a long way to go before it becomes a commodity. Nevertheless, the prices of both strengths lost ground last month, as they also did for sumatriptan 50mg and 100mg (see Figures 1 and 2). Meanwhile, nearly all the healthy price rises in the UK market were from very low bases (see Figure 3). **G**

BIGGEST FALLERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Doxazosin tabs 1mg 28	£0.16	-6	£0.33	-34
Beclometasone 250µg 200	£1.35	-10	£6.72	-26
Sumatriptan tabs 100mg 6	£0.84	±0	£1.69	-25
Aspirin tabs 75mg 28	£0.10	±0	£0.16	-19
Ondansetron tabs 8mg 10	£1.48	-1	£18.27	-18
Enalapril maleate tabs 5mg 28	£0.17	±0	£0.40	-17

Figure 1 (below): Comparison between the periods 1-31 January and 1-25 February 2009 of the lowest and average UK market prices of fast-moving generics. Each average price was calculated from at least 33 data points. Figure 2 (above) and Figure 3 (above right): Biggest changes recorded between the periods 1-31 January

BIGGEST RISERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Folic Acid tabs 5mg 28	£0.14	±0	£0.33	+35
Prednisolone tabs 5mg 28	£0.21	±0	£0.43	+22
Ramipril caps 1.25mg 28	£0.22	±0	£0.44	+21
Amoxicillin caps 500mg 21	£0.36	+3	£0.80	+20
Cetirizine tabs 10mg 30	£0.17	+6	£0.33	+19
Co-Proxamol tabs 32.5/325mg100	£6.70	+46	£10.93	+16

and 1-25 February 2009 in lowest and average UK market prices of about 120 commonly-dispensed generics. The basket specifically excludes the 'fast movers' shown below, but includes other presentations of the same products. Each average price was calculated from at least 19 data points (Source - WaveData).

FAST MOVERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Alendronate tabs 70mg 4	£0.24	-14	£0.51	-19
Amlodipine tabs 5mg 28	£0.22	±0	£0.34	-4
Amlodipine tabs 10mg 28	£0.33	-3	£0.48	-6
Carvedilol tabs 6.25mg 28	£0.30	±0	£1.05	-4
Carvedilol tabs 12.5mg 28	£0.36	±0	£0.85	-3
Ciprofloxacin tabs 500mg 10	£0.26	-7	£0.57	-7
Citalopram tabs 10mg 28	£0.23	±0	£0.58	+18
Citalopram tabs 20mg 28	£0.41	+8	£0.80	+8
Citalopram tabs 40mg 28	£0.41	±0	£0.93	+12
Clarithromycin tabs 250mg 14	£1.26	±0	£2.30	-6
Enalapril tabs 20mg 28	£0.35	+3	£0.59	-16
Fosinopril tabs 20mg 28	£1.52	±0	£2.18	-5
Glimepiride tabs 4mg 30	£0.70	-3	£2.65	-13
Lamotrigine tabs 50mg 56	£1.96	+1	£3.13	-4
Lamotrigine tabs 100mg 56	£3.30	±0	£4.58	-1
Lansoprazole caps 15mg 28	£0.79	±0	£1.06	-12
Lansoprazole caps 30mg 28	£1.57	-1	£1.90	-11
Lisinopril tabs 5mg 28	£0.18	±0	£0.28	-6
Lisinopril tabs 10mg 28	£0.20	-9	£0.37	-4
Lisinopril tabs 20mg 28	£0.35	-3	£0.57	-5
Metformin tabs 500mg 84	£0.37	-5	£0.56	-10
Mirtazapine tabs 30mg 28	£1.05	±0	£1.56	-19
Omeprazole caps 10mg 28	£0.63	±0	£1.12	+1
Omeprazole caps 20mg 28	£0.62	-2	£0.83	-6
Ondansetron tabs 4mg 30	£2.09	±0	£28.83	-9

FAST MOVERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Paroxetine tabs 20mg 30	£0.88	-7	£1.82	-9
Pravastatin tabs 20mg 28	£0.72	-18	£1.36	-14
Pravastatin tabs 40mg 28	£1.20	-14	£2.05	-7
Ramipril caps 2.5mg 28	£0.26	±0	£0.44	+8
Ramipril caps 5mg 28	£0.35	+9	£0.55	+8
Ramipril caps 10mg 28	£0.49	-2	£0.71	+4
Risperidone tabs 2mg 60	£1.60	-3	£3.89	-11
Sertraline tabs 50mg 28	£0.33	±0	£0.70	+4
Sertraline tabs 100mg 28	£0.46	-4	£0.96	+1
Simvastatin tabs 10mg 28	£0.10	±0	£0.24	-1
Simvastatin tabs 20mg 28	£0.16	±0	£0.33	-3
Simvastatin tabs 40mg 28	£0.41	-5	£0.66	+8
Sumatriptan tabs 50mg 6	£0.75	±0	£1.07	-17
Tamsulosin caps 400µg 30	£1.35	-6	£2.16	-13
Terbinafine tabs 250mg 14	£1.23	+3	£1.70	±0

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