

Special points of interest

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Greece to cut 4,000 drug prices by a fifth

The Greek government has released a list of over 4,000 drugs on which it will impose heavy price cuts.

This is the first stage of the re-pricing of around 12,000 drugs in Greece, and will see an average price reduction of 20 per cent.

The report comes from the Greek newspaper Ta Nea which says that the new 'Greek price bulletin' will be "very drastic" in its scope as it comes into place this week.

Reports from analysts at IHS Global state that AstraZeneca's prostate cancer drug Casodex will be the biggest victim, seeing its price reduced by nearly 60% from €326.58 (\$419.29) to €131.69.

Sanofi-Aventis's blockbuster anticoagulant Lovenox will also be hit hard with its price cut by 28%, from €124.31 to €89.81.

Others noted by Ta Nea includes a near 35% reduction for J&J/Janssen-Cilag's plaque psoriasis drug Stelara and a 38% slash in the price of Roche's Mircera for anaemia associated with chronic kidney disease.

Among these 4,000 drugs included in the list are reported to be 1,350 generics that will be priced at a maximum of 72% of the price of the original patented drug.

According to Ta Nea, the Greek finance minister has imposed further limitations so that any increase to the wholesale price of any medicine cannot exceed 10%, and no reduction can exceed 40 per cent.

The Greek government will also implement an electronic prescription system, which will enable the authorities to check on the prescribing of doctors, and enforce a stricter policy of prescribing cheaper (i.e. generic) products.

The austerity measures seem to be working for the Greek state, with latest figures showing that pharma expenditure in its social security funds fell significantly in July, with a 28% year-on-year reduction for the IKA fund (the main social security organisation), a 23% cut for the OGA (farmers' health insurance) and a 17% lowering for the OAEE (mandatory insurance for the self-employed).

The country has now implemented an international reference-pricing (IRP) system, which references the average price of drugs in the three lowest-priced markets of the EU.

IHS Global believe this will "most certainly have an effect on the prices of drugs" in countries that use Greece as a reference country in their IRP system.

IHS also said that most pharmaceutical producers agree that this pricing system is much better than the "blanket price-reductions" introduced several months ago.

Inpharm 08/09/10



Lack of branded medicines 'hitting patients hard'

The UK is facing a serious shortage of branded medicines and the problem has got worse in the last year, have warned.

Drugs intended for UK patients are being exported for sale abroad to take advantage of exchange rates and there have been issues with pharmaceutical company quota systems.

The Chemist and Druggist Stock Survey 2010 found more than 80 per cent of pharmacists think getting hold of branded medicines is tougher than ever, leaving patients facing long waits.

The Parkinson's drug Sinemet, breast cancer drug Femara, schizophrenia medicine Zyprexa and the anti-depressant Cipralex are among the most difficult to obtain.

Almost 90 per cent of pharmacists spent more than an hour a week trying to source key medicines and most were braced for worse in 2011, with 60 per cent predicting wide shortages.

Some said shortages had triggered suffering in patients with life-threatening illnesses.

The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry called for urgent government action to stop the overseas sale of medicines intended for UK patients.

Richard Barker, its director general, said: "Manufacturers have supplied more than enough medicines to satisfy patient demand in the UK but there is still not enough getting through to the front line."

Scotsman 04/09/10

MANUFACTURER SUPPLY DEALS BLAMED FOR DRUG SHORTAGES

Manufacturer supply deals designed to shore up medicine stocks have actually made it harder for pharmacists to get hold of drugs.

Over 70 per cent of pharmacists said it was harder to source products from pharma firms running distribution schemes, the C+D Stock Survey 2010

found.

Only 6 per cent said supply deals had improved access to medicines.

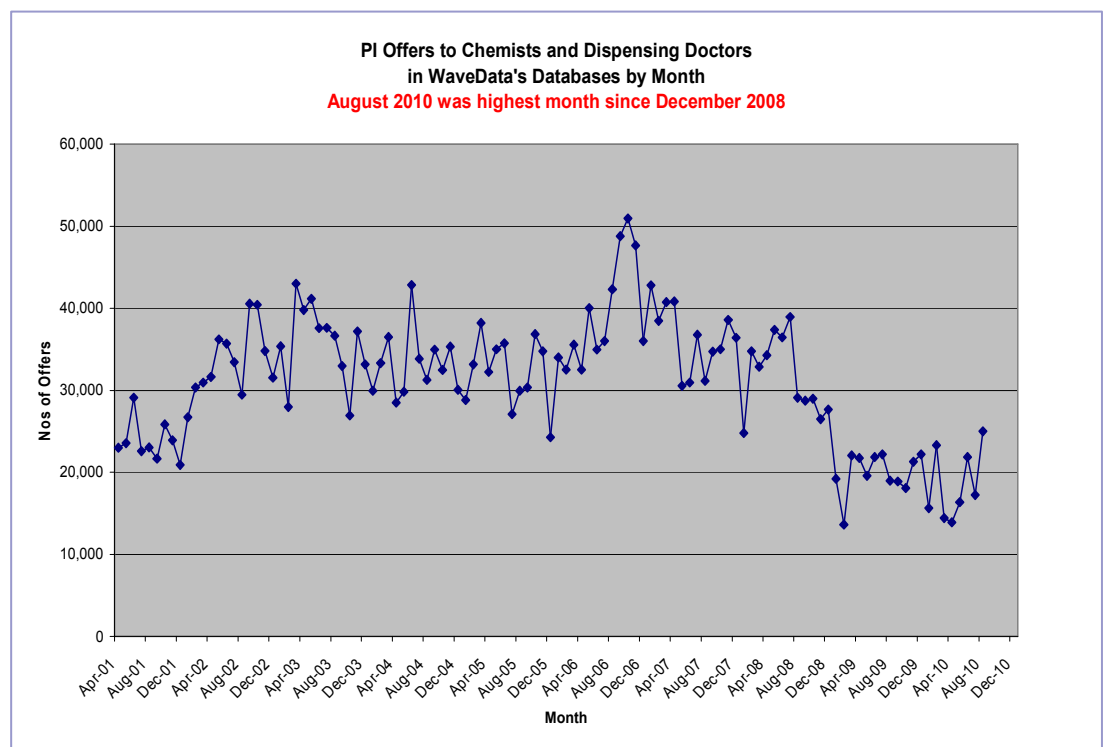
More than 20 manufacturers have launched bespoke supply arrangements since 2007, with most citing improved medicine supply to patients as a key reason to change.

Thirteen of the 19 manufacturers whose products

either appear on shortages lists or are most frequently linked to shortages according to PSNC operate a supply model.

Three quarters of pharmacists said they waited three days or more for emergency stock to be delivered from a manufacturer, according to the C+D survey.

Chemist & Druggist 03/09/10



Parallel trading restricting medicine access, says ABPI

THE ABPI HAS BLAMED PARALLEL TRADING BY A MINORITY OF PHARMACISTS AS THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE CURRENT MEDICINES SHORTAGE IN THE UK.

The pharma body was responding to a new survey by Chemist + Druggist magazine of around 200 pharmacists that highlighted a number of concerns.

Twenty-seven per cent of those surveyed said they had known a patient whose health had suffered as a result of difficulties in sourcing a medicine and seven out of ten respondents reported they were “very concerned” their patients had been affected by drug shortages.

Chemist + Druggist also reported that 93% of pharmacists have had to ask a GP to change a prescription because of problems sourcing a drug.

But the ABPI the situation had not been caused by a lack of supply from pharma companies, but was instead due to parallel trading by some pharmacists.

Richard Barker, director general of the industry body, said pharma has supplied “more than enough medicines” to satisfy patient demand in the UK, but admitted that there is still not enough getting through to the front line.

“We believe that the problem is worsening,” he said, despite efforts by the Supply Chain Forum (a new round-table for parties concerned by supply chain actions, set up by the Department of Health earlier this year).

Barker said the shortages were the result of a “minority of pharmacists trading medicines intended for UK patients”, and that to curb this the roles of the pharmacist and wholesaler “need to be clearly separated”, as they are in a number of other European countries.

A spokeswoman from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain told Pharmafocus that the survey’s 200 respondent was a “tiny proportion” of the 48,000 pharmacists in the UK, but acknowledged there was a problem with the supply of medicines.

Parallel trading occurs when patented drugs are repackaged, either by pharmacists or wholesalers, for sale elsewhere in the EU.

Several years ago EU countries were importing their drugs into the UK because of the strength of the pound, but more recently the situation has reversed as the pound weakened against the Euro, allowing UK pharmacists to sell their drugs into the EU.

This story was highlighted in [February](#) after the Royal Surrey County Hospital Foundation made £300,000 profit through selling medicines on to parallel traders who exported the drug to lower-priced European markets.

After that story emerged the ABPI restricted the amount of drugs that are supplied to pharmacists so that they only received the exact number asked for.

Some pharmacists however have underestimated the amount of patented drugs required and under the stricter system have been ‘short-changed’.

To combat this an ‘emergency order arrangement’ has been established for pharmacists, but an ABPI spokesperson said that it was not uncommon to receive requests that “clearly are not emergency requirements and may in fact be certain pharmacists trying to obtain medicines for contingency stock building or diversion overseas”.

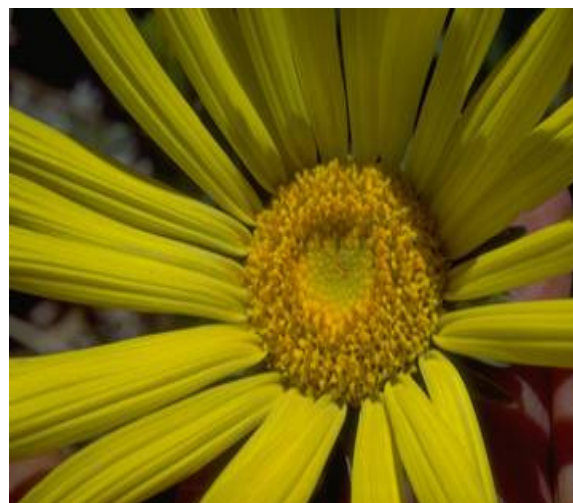
The spokesperson added that this should be discouraged, as this only “exacerbates the problem”.

Inpharm 06/09/10

Gabapentin’s price keeps on growing

Price changes struggled to get into double digits in August, when 100-capsule packs of gabapentin 300mg stood out, appearing in our ‘biggest risers’ table for the third month running (see Figure 3). Back in June, the lowest trade price of the product was £2.99 (US\$4.61) after a modest 6% monthly increase; while the average price had moved up by about a third to £5.60 (Generics bulletin, 16 July 2010, page 19). August’s lowest price, however, more than doubled to £10.42 and the average price rose to £16.32.

To see more go to <http://www.wavedata.co.uk/news2.asp> and view our article from this month’s Generics Bulletin.





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WaveData — Top ten products

According to WaveData, these were the most commonly investigated products in searches of the online pricing data at www.wavedata.net

Both uk and pi prices were viewed for each product, giving some indication of where the focus was in August 2010

Levothyroxine Tabs 25mcg 28

Levothyroxine Tabs 50mcg 28

Metformin Tabs 500mg 28

Gabapentin Caps 300mg 100

Paroxetine Tabs 20mg 30

Alendronate Tabs 70mg 4

Amlodipine Besilate Tabs 10mg 28

Amlodipine Besilate Tabs 5mg 28

Bendroflumethiazide Tabs 2.5mg 28

Fluoxetine Caps 20mg 30

This bulletin now goes out to 1000 plus people, and it is growing each month.

If you would like to add or suggest any articles/comments, please let me know by the 13th October 2010, as I will be issuing the next one on the 20th

October 2010

If you have any colleagues who would like to receive this, please let them know about it.

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