

Commercial bulletin

Special points of interest

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Patients suffer as supply issues are branded 'worse than ever'

Stock shortages are worse than ever, with pharmacies spending over an hour every week chasing medicines, an audit by Devon LPC has suggested.

The survey of 70 local pharmacies found that despite pharmacists' best efforts, patients were being harmed by the delays in receiving their medication, with 100 patients suffering "low or moderate harm" over a two-week period.

Experts branded the findings "outrageous" and "unacceptable", and said not enough was being done to tackle stock shortages in the UK.

In the Devon audit, a total of 537 supply issues or 7.7 per pharmacy were recorded over two weeks in November 2010, compared to 369 or 4.7 per pharmacy, in a similar audit in April 2009. In the latest audit, pharmacists spent on average 20 minutes chasing each medicine issue, which would add up to over 65 hours per pharmacy in a year. In 95 instances, emergency supplies had to be ordered and prescribers were contacted to change prescriptions in some cases.

Devon LPC pharmacist Mark Stone said the results showed the efforts being put in by pharmacists on the front line to help patients get their medicines, and he thanked Devon contractors for taking part in the audit.

Devon pharmacists reported cases of patients splitting tablets and having to visit other pharmacies. And where supply issues occurred, patients had to wait on average 4.4 days to receive their medicines.

The Patients Association warned: "Not only can delays cause physical harm to patients but the stress experienced by them may also have a detrimental effect on health."

The Devon findings were backed by a C+D poll (p8) in which 83 per cent of pharmacists thought stock shortages were worse than ever, and all were experiencing problems.

Reaction to the shortages audit findings

"If patients are waiting 4.4 days for medicines, that's outrageous. You'd be annoyed waiting [that long] for a new fridge." John D'Arcy, MD, [Numark](#)

"It not acceptable that some patients in Devon are having to wait 4.4 days for their medicine." Katherine Murphy, chief executive, Patients Association

"PSNC is calling for the DH to put in place a framework that allows effective action to be taken with manufacturers where patients' medicine supplies are not adequate." Sue Sharpe, [PSNC](#) chief executive

"The DH carefully monitors data about supply problems... we will continue to review the situation and take appropriate action as necessary." [Department of Health](#) spokesperson

"Stock shortages remain a challenge for our teams and take time to resolve, which adds pressure on an already very busy pharmacy team." [Boots](#) spokesperson.

Chemist & Druggist 21/02/11

SIGMA TO PARTNER WITH ALLIANCE HEALTHCARE

Alliance Healthcare (AH) products will be offered through Sigma Pharmaceuticals, the wholesaler has announced.

The move will see all Alpha services, including exclusive product launches, offered through Sigma, with joint-sourcing of generics, AH com-

mercial director Tony Foreman told the Sigma Conference in Mauritius.

Sigma customers without AH accounts will also be offered selected branded ethical drugs from the wholesaler.

Speaking exclusively to C+D, Sigma managing director Bharat Shah said talks were in the preliminary stages, and there

were "no concrete plans" as to how the partnership would work going forward. However, Sigma would remain independent from AH, Mr Shah added.

"We are independent, we are not part of a group, we are not merging, and we will remain independent like our customers," Mr Shah said.
Chemist & Druggist 01/03/11

EU Council approves plans for single European patent

Ministers of 25 European Union member states have now approved the creation of a single European patent, although Italy and Spain are still refusing to join.

Moves to go ahead to create a region-wide single patent, or "unitary patent protection," were approved by the Council of the European Union last week, and will now proceed under the enhanced cooperation procedure - which allows groups of member states to adopt new rules where unanimous agreement cannot be reached - with the Commission expected to publish draft regulations by the end of this month.

The Italian and Spanish ministers' objections, which have long delayed progress with the initiative, are based on the Commission's proposal that English, French and German should be the official languages for the new system. These have been the working languages of the European Patent Office (EPO) since 1997, but Italy and Spain say this would give British, French and German companies an unfair advantage, and have proposed either that Spanish and Italian should be included among the official languages or that English should be the single reference language. This latter alternative has been rejected by Michel Barnier, the European Commissioner for Internal Market and Services.

Following the Commission vote, officials said that Spain and Italy will be free to join the procedure whenever they wish, while Commissioner Barnier added that all European companies, including Spanish and Italian firms, will be entitled to use the single patent.

The Commissioner also referred to the opinion issued by the European Court of Justice just before the Council vote, which stated that the establishment of a European and Community Patent Court, also included in the Council's proposals, would not be compatible with EU law. The Commission will, within a few weeks, produce a common position with the Council on the issue, "while of course respecting the Court's ruling," said Mr Barnier.

After the Justices issued their opinion, Commission spokesmen said that their decision should have no impact on the enhanced cooperation procedure and that its issuance enabled work to continue on the creation of a unified patent litigation system. "The creation of unitary patent protection is legally distinct from the creation of the European Patent Court," the Commission emphasised.

Italy's Foreign Ministry welcomed the Court of Justice's opinion and noted that Italy's position had always been that the judges' decision should be sought before examining other aspects of the EU patent regime. There have been suggestions that Italy and Spain could seek an opinion from the Court of Justice as to the legality of using the enhanced cooperation procedure in this case, although observers point out that it has already been declared lawful by legal experts at the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament.

The Council meeting was chaired by Hungary's minister of state for strategic affairs, Zoltan Csefalvay, who said the vote represented "an historic day for innovation and the internal market." The extra costs to European industry created by the current fragmented system are estimated at around 750 million euros a year, he said, and forecast that "a higher-quality, simpler, less costly and more business-friendly system" would encourage more investment in R&D and thus "significantly" increase Europe's capacity for innovation.

However, a leading expert points out that the single patent will also be available to non-European companies. "The new system will enable foreign businesses to protect their ideas throughout Europe in one fell swoop," says Simon Mounteney, a partner at patent and trademark legal firm Marks & Clerk. "Europe's economy won't be the only one to benefit from this move," he adds.

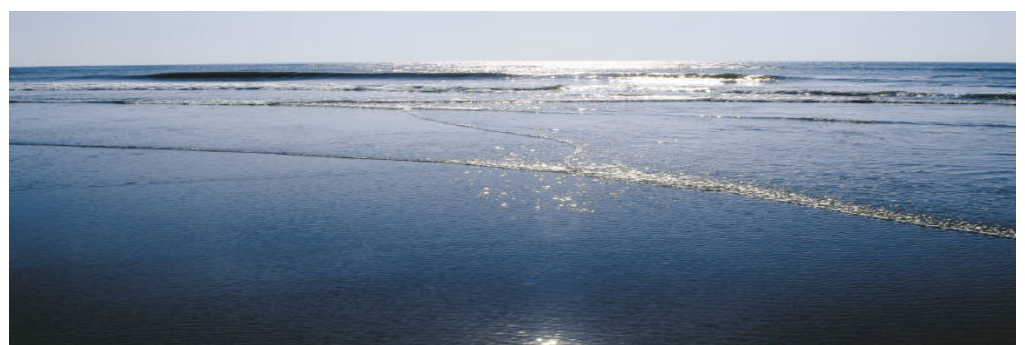
Links

www.consilium.europa.eu

www.ec.europa.eu

www.marks-clerk.com

Pharmatimes 14/03/11



Chindia changes wavedata

With increasing numbers of requests for information from non uk companies, wavedata has had to re-think its online presence. The main changes you may notice are a single design for all the wavedata sites and a simplification of the text used. Charles Joynton, Wave-Data's managing director said "international visitors were having troubles understanding the technical parts of our websites, so we decided to make things easier for them. This should also make understanding what we do, and finding answers to questions, easier for uk companies as well." You can see the new web design at <http://www.wavedata.co.uk/> and the new design will be rolled out to other websites over the next few weeks.

SUPPLY DEALS BRANDED 'RESTRAINT OF TRADE'

A former LPC secretary has taken his concerns about supply issues all the way to health secretary Andrew Lansley, complaining that current supply arrangements represent a "restraint of trade".

Roger King, of Lytchett Pharmacy in Dorset, contacted his local MP Annette Brooke to highlight the difficulties he had obtaining stock.

He said it was acceptable for a manufacturer to supply directly to pharmacies, but not acceptable to offer only one choice of wholesaler. He asked: "When will this restraint of trade and madness end?"

Ms Brooke has written to Mr Lansley about Mr King's calls for the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) to look into direct-to-pharmacy systems.

The OFT first investigated Pfizer's direct-to-pharmacy scheme in 2007, and found such deals posed a "significant risk" of increasing NHS costs. The report concluded: "Future intervention by the OFT may be necessary" if other manufacturers adopted the model.

Ian Facer, chairman of NPA and Pharmacy Voice, agreed exclusive direct-to-pharmacy schemes were problematic. "Exclusive supply arrangements may meet the narrow objectives of manufacturers, but their proliferation is not in the interests of patients, pharmacies and the wider supply chain."

PSNC agreed competition among wholesalers would drive service improvements and cost efficiencies. Head of information services Lindsay McClure said: "It's important to ensure that these benefits are not endangered by supply arrangements that unduly restrict choice."

The Department of Health said it would respond to Mr King's letter in due course.

Chemist & Druggist 10/03/11

CHIESI AGREES DISTRIBUTION DEAL

Pharmaceutical manufacturer [Chiesi](#) has agreed a deal to distribute its products in the UK exclusively through [AAH Pharmaceuticals](#), [Alliance Healthcare](#), [Phoenix Healthcare](#) in the UK and Sangers in Northern Ireland.

[Chiesi](#) said the move was designed to "maintain and even strengthen" its commitment to "quality service levels" while "sustaining a robust supply chain for the future".

[Chiesi](#) managing director Tom Delahoyde said: "Simplifying our approach to distribution enables us to operate an efficient and more transparent supply chain, maintain our commitment to high service levels and presents us with the opportunity to further enhance our business relationship with our wholesaler partners," he said.

[Chiesi](#) said it was working closely with wholesalers to ensure a smooth transition to

the new distribution arrangements and that customers had been contacted with information on the change.

[PSNC](#) said the announcement from [Chiesi](#) "follows changes to distribution arrangements by other pharmaceutical manufacturers and will further reduce competition in the wholesale market".

Chemist & Druggist 08/03/11

Price Watch UK

Products shortages lead authorities to act

Pharmacists are discussing with the UK Department of Health what can be done about the number of generic medicines in short supply. Their representatives on the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) pointed out that nine products had been granted 'no cheaper stock obtainable' (NCSO) status by the department for February, meaning pharmacists would be reimbursed for dispensing an equivalent product that was more expensive than the generic's Drug Tariff reimbursement price.

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

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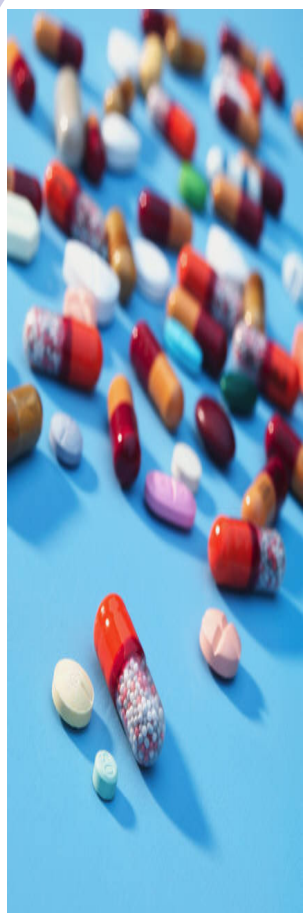


WaveData - Pricing you into the Market

We have noticed that the value of the Euro has declined from £0.93 to £0.85 over the last year or so, putting parallel imported products (absent since 2008) back on chemist's shelves.

Therefore WaveData are running a 33% off offer on their WaveData Live Pricing Information service at <http://www.wavedata.net> until the 30th April.

To register your interest, please email your contact details to info@wavedata.co.uk with the words 'wavedata live offer' in the title.



WaveData Live provides up to the minute and current information about the discounts being offered to chemists and dispensing doctors by wholesalers and manufacturers so you can see how well your DTP or reduced wholesaling is working.

33% off

It also is a useful guide to the prices being offered for imports and generics, and will show who is selling parallel imports of your brand, and who is launching or selling generics.

The data is updated every 15 minutes to keep you ahead of the competition.

Till 30th April

Please contact us and we will send you the current costs for this service as well as the 33% reduction, which is available until the end of April 2011.

WaveData started collecting information about imports and generics in 2000, and now supplies competitor intelligence to many pharma, surgical and wholesale companies.

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Drug labelling to be "more clearly-worded" within six months

"**Confusing**" instructions on medicine bottles and packs dispensed by UK pharmacies are to be replaced with simpler words and phrases, starting from this month.

Around two million prescriptions are issued every day in the UK, and the law requires each bottle or pack of medicines which is dispensed to have a printed label explaining how the medicine should be taken. However, many commonly-used phrases on medicine labels are easily misunderstood, causing patients to behave in ways which compromise the safety and effectiveness of their treatment, according to work done by researchers at the University of Leeds in collaboration with the Leeds-based company Luto Research.

"It is vital that wordings on labels are simple and straightforward," said Theo Raynor, professor of pharmacy at Leeds University. "Most medicines do contain leaflets providing detailed information for patients, but these leaflets can get lost or overlooked. Patients' behaviour tends to be guided by the instructions on the outside of medicine bottles and packets of pills, so these must be as clear and unambiguous as possible," he added.

Prof Raynor and colleagues tested a selection of instructions on a large number of volunteers aged 20-80, rewording any phrases that people found confusing and then checked that their suggested revisions were easier to understand with more volunteers.

One example of a word which the researchers found was not always readily understood is "drowsiness." Comprehension is improved by using the phrase: "this medicine may make you feel sleepy" instead, they say.

Another good example is the wording "avoid alcoholic drinks," noted Prof Raynor. "Our user tests have shown that the word 'avoid' can cause confusion and that some people think it only means they should limit their alcohol intake. This phrase will now be replaced by the instruction: 'do not drink alcohol while taking this medicine,' which is far clearer," he said.

The revised phrases have been included in the latest version of the British National Formulary (BNF), which commissioned the research, and the software used by large pharmacy chains and independent pharmacists to print instruction labels is updated regularly, "so we would expect to see these new phrases appear within the next six months," said Prof Raynor.

Links

www.leeds.ac.uk

www.bnf.org

Pharmatimes 08/03/11

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 February 2011

Anastrozole Tabs 1mg 28
Nicorandil Tabs 10mg 60
Prednisolone Tabs 5mg 28
Simvastatin Tabs 40mg 28
Nicorandil Tabs 20mg 60
Bendroflumethiazide Tabs 2.5mg 28
Gliclazide MR Tabs 30mg 60
Mycophenolate Caps 250mg 100
Prednisolone E/C Tabs 2.5mg 28
Risedronate Sodium Tabs 3

This bulletin now goes out to 1300 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 6th April 2011, as I will be issuing the next one on the 13th April 2011.

If you have any colleagues who would like to receive this, please let them know about it. You can view all copies of the Bulletin at www.wavedata.co.uk

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