

Special points of Interest

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Pharma & Healthcare

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Spain passes law to push for even more generic use

Spain has passed a new law requiring doctors to prescribe medicines by their generic names only, a move which political leaders say will save around 2.4 billion euros in a full year.

The new legislation requires doctors to write prescriptions specifying the drug's active ingredient only, plus the dosage and format, and for pharmacists to then dispense the cheapest version available. The measure will not affect newer branded drugs which are still in patent, but as it also stipulates that patients should be told the generic name only of the treatment they are being prescribed, they will not know if it is a branded or generic product.

The new initiatives are part of a package agreed by parliament this week aimed at reducing Spain's deficit to 6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) this year, from a level of 9.2% in 2010 and 11.1% the year before.

The move introduced by the ruling Socialist Party has the support of other parties; for example, Basque nationalist deputy Josu Erkoreka told The Guardian newspaper that "the interests of the big drugs companies must give way to public interest, and what matters is reducing the deficit and lowering the drugs bill for millions of people who use public health services."

However, others warn that jobs will be lost in the pharmaceutical sector as a result of the new policy.

Spain's national drugs bill has already fallen 10% this year, partly as a result of the austerity measures introduced in 2010. These included changes to the reference price system on which pricing levels were determined by the cheapest daily cost of treatment, based on defined daily dose (DDD). Products whose prices were more than 30% higher than the reference price were required to be cut to the reference price level, either immediately or over a period of two years. If by that time their prices were not down to the reference price level, they would no longer be eligible for reimbursement.

Other austerity measures introduced last year included price cuts on nearly all reference-priced generics - which accounted for 23.5% of the national drugs market by value and 38.2% by volume during the 12 months to September 2010 - and new rebates for reimbursable patented drugs. In 2010, Spain's national drugs bill totaled 12.1 billion euros.

Links

www.guardian.co.uk

Pharmatimes 25/08/11



ABPI blames pharmacists for stock shortages

The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) has hit out at pharmacists for creating medicine shortages, stressing that pharmaceutical companies have taken "many additional steps" to ensure UK patients' needs are met. A "small number of pharmacies" were still exporting medicines for profit, which had led to supply issues, the ABPI told C+D.

"**Medicine** supply shortages in the UK are primarily caused by the exportation of medicines intended for UK patients in order to make a profit," said an ABPI spokesperson. "While most pharmacists continue to put extra effort into ensuring patients receive the medicines they need, unfortunately a small number of pharmacists in the supply chain are trading extra medicines abroad."

Manufacturers had implemented "emergency distribution arrangements" to ensure pharmacists received the medicines they needed, the ABPI stressed. It added that direct to pharmacy distribution was one of these emergency measures.

Manufacturer Eli Lilly also said that the Department of Health had put supply issues down to the exporting of medicines "at least in part". The company had previously said [it had a "list of pharmacies" that could exporting medicines in short supply](#).

However, the British Association of Pharmaceutical Wholesalers (BAPW) said that "no one party" was to blame. "The incentives that exist in the medicines supply system have created the conditions for some delays in patients receiving branded medicines," said BAPW executive director Martin Sawer. "The supply chain requires more obligations to be placed on the players and we believe the principles of a public service obligation should be applied."

Pharmacy Voice echoed Mr Sawer's comments. "The government has not ruled out legal obligations on manufacturers and wholesalers," said Pharmacy Voice chief executive Rob Darracott, calling for "active discussions" on the subject.

However, the ABPI acknowledged in a statement: "Trading in medicines is a legitimate activity in Europe due to the free movement of goods; however, as the UK now has amongst the lowest prices in Europe, medicines intended for UK patients are flowing out of the UK."

Chemist & Druggist 05/09/11

Wales: highest number of Rx items per head in UK

Wales now has the highest number of prescription items dispensed per head of population than anywhere else in the UK, and critics say the government's free-prescriptions policy is no longer sustainable.

During the last financial year, the number of prescription items dispensed in Wales rose 3.3% to 70.1 million, from 67.9 million the year before, and averaged 23.2 for each person in the principality. This compares to 19.9 per head in Northern Ireland, 17.7 in England and 17.6 in Scotland.

The cost of all prescriptions dispensed in Wales also rose last year, by 1% to £594.3 million, equal to £188.50 for every person registered with a GP.

These figures show that the universal free prescriptions policy, introduced in Wales in 2007, "simply cannot be sustained," said Assembly Member (AM) Darren Millar, the Welsh Conservatives' health spokesman.

"Since 1999, the number of items dispensed per head has increased by 61% and the cost of those items has risen by more than £206 million. That fuels serious concern over the Welsh Labour government's use of precious NHS resources," said Mr Millar.

He added: "as millions are spent on pills and ointments that can be bought for pennies in supermarkets, cancer patients are being denied access to over 20 drugs that are routinely available in England."

"Those who can afford to contribute towards their prescriptions should be able to - and the money saved should be used, in part, to create a Cancer Drugs Fund - similar to the one benefitting thousands of patients over the border" in England, said Mr Millar, who represents Clwyd West.

However, sources close to Welsh Health Minister Lesley Griffiths said that the Labour government sees free prescriptions as a long-term investment in improving health and that providing people with the medications they need will help keep people out of hospital and thus reduce the costs to the NHS. The government makes "absolutely no apologies for this," the source added.

Nor does the Welsh government see a need for a separate Cancer Drugs Fund in Wales, the source is reported as saying, pointing out that Wales already spends around £5 more per head of population than England on cancer treatment and that, even with the additional £200 million made available for England by the Fund, this is still less than what is spent per head of population in Wales.

Links

www.wales.gov.uk

www.welshconservatives.com

Pharmatimes 11/09/11

Have you ever wished you had a list of drugs coming off patent?

Then a new service launched this month by MPA will help you.

MPA Pharma Patent Spotlight is a monthly report that identifies which products are due to lose their product patent protection in the next two years; which have supplementary protection certificates (SPCs) and whether any have been granted paediatric extensions.

The report, written by patent experts with over 40 years of pharmaceutical patent experience; is emailed to subscribers as an Excel spreadsheet. In addition, an email alert service notifies subscribers of any late changes affecting products.

The service costs £995 per annum for the UK Pharma Patent Spotlight. Coverage and pricing for other EU member states is available upon request.

MPA have asked us to collect the names of those interested, so please email me (Jackie Moss Jackie@wavedata.co.uk) with the keywords 'Patent Spotlight' and your contact details.

MPA Patent Spotlight - Sample Data - As of 1st January 2008									
INN	Brand	Patentee	SPC Applicant	1st EU Authorisation	Patent		SPC & Paediatric Expiry & Status		
					Expiry	Status	SPC	Paediatric	SPC Status
fondaparinux sodium	Arixtra	Sanofi-Synthelabo	Sanofi-Synthelabo	21/03/2002	16/01/2003	Expired	16/01/2008	not applicable	Inforce
deferiprone	Ferriprox	NRD Corporation	BTG International	25/08/1999	23/03/2003	Expired	23/03/2008	not applicable	Inforce
interferon alfa-n1	Infergen	Amgen Inc	Amgen Inc.	01/02/1999	24/04/2003	Expired	24/04/2008	not applicable	Inforce
imidapril Hcl.	Harlead	Tanabe Saiyaku	Tanabe Saiyaku	12/11/1997	19/05/2003	Expired	19/05/2008	not applicable	Inforce
bicalutamide	Bicaluplex	ICI plc	Zeneca	23/02/1995	07/07/2003	Expired	07/07/2008	not applicable	Inforce
desflurane	Suprane	BOC Inc.	Ormeda Pharm.	19/07/1993	31/01/2008	Expired	18/07/2008	not applicable	Inforce
tiludronic acid (tiludronate)	Selid	Sanofi	Sanofi	20/02/1995	25/07/2003	Expired	24/07/2008	not applicable	Inforce
lenogastim	Granocyte	Chugai Saiyaku KK	Chugai Saiyaku	28/07/1993	07/02/2006	Expired	27/02/2008	not applicable	Inforce
fluvastatin	Lescol	Sandoz	Sandoz AG	23/08/1993	21/11/2003	Expired	22/08/2008	not applicable	Inforce
cefdinir	Omnicef	Fujisawa	Fujisawa	16/06/1997	27/09/2003	Expired	27/09/2008	not applicable	Inforce
interferon beta-1b	Betaferon	Cetus Corp	Cetus Corp.	30/11/1995	13/10/2003	Expired	12/10/2008	not applicable	Inforce
ropinirole hydrochloride	Requip	SmithKline Beecham	SmithKline Beecham	02/07/1996	30/11/2003	Expired	29/11/2008	not applicable	Inforce
venlafaxine hydrochloride	Efexor	American Home Products	American Home Products	05/05/1994	06/12/2003	Expired	06/12/2008	not applicable	Inforce
famciclovir	Famvir	Beecham Group plc	Beecham Group	10/12/1993	08/09/2005	Expired	09/12/2008	not applicable	Inforce
atosiban	Tractodile	Ferring	Ferring	20/01/2000	14/12/2003	Expired	14/12/2008	not applicable	Inforce

Lower venlafaxine prices boost pharmacy

Independent pharmacists and dispensing doctors in England and Wales must have been rubbing their hands with glee last month as the average trade prices for venlafaxine XL capsules fell by double-digit amounts and their profit margins increased accordingly. Both the 75mg and 150mg strengths of the 'modified-release' products are still in category C of the Drug Tariff reimbursement list. This is based on the trade price of the originator, namely Wyeth's (now Pfizer's) Efexor XL. So while pharmacists could buy 28-capsule packs of the 75mg strength for £0.90 (US\$1.44) on average last month – after an 11% price fall since July (see Figure 1) – they were getting £22.08 for dispensing them, a profit margin of 96%. By the same measure, the generic was selling in the trade for just 4% of the brand price.

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

WaveData

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Morrisons supermarkets developing plans for in-store GP surgeries

Exclusive Supermarket giant Morrisons has revealed it is considering following the lead of Sainsbury's and opening GP surgeries in store, in a move that will fuel the debate over the commercialisation of primary care.

[Sainsbury's offers free space to GPs wanting to run a surgery in their supermarkets](#), and has two GP surgeries in place – in stores at Heaton Park, Greater Manchester, and Colne, Lancashire. It announced in June it would be opening six new in-store GP surgeries across the UK.

At the time, RCGP chair Dr Clare Gerada said she was concerned supermarkets were not a suitable environment for primary care, warning: 'Dealing with the sick and vulnerable needs more than a conveyor belt, quick-fix approach.' But a spokesperson for Morrisons told Pulse the chain also had designs on primary care: 'We are looking at provision of GP services in the store environment. [We're] potentially looking at a different model to the one Sainsbury's is using.'

That suggests Morrisons could be looking to charge GPs for setting up in its supermarkets, or might even be looking to become the first supermarket chain to directly run GP practices. The chain said the timescale for introducing GP surgeries was 'unclear'.

Dr David Melville, a GP in Havant, expressed concern at the move: 'Patients are going to walk into supermarkets past all the donuts, the unhealthy food, the highly salted food, to get to the GP.'

'Having a supermarket owning the building could prejudice GP independence.'

Tesco, Asda and Waitrose said they had no plans to follow suit.

Pulse 22/08/11



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 August 2011

- Sertraline Tabs 50mg 28
- Hydrocortisone Tabs 10mg 30
- Sertraline Tabs 100mg 28
- Bendroflumethiazide Tabs 2.5mg 28
- Citalopram Tabs 20mg 28
- Exemestane Tabs 25mg 30
- Levothyroxine Tabs 25mcg 28
- Simvastatin Tabs 20mg 28
- Amoxicillin Caps 500mg 21
- Clopidogrel Tabs 75mg 30

This bulletin now goes out to 1600 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 12th October 2011, as I will be issuing the next one on the 19th October 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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