

# Atorvastatin has record but soon slows

Almost a year after Pfizer's blockbuster Lipitor brand lost its exclusivity in the UK, opening up the local atorvastatin market, we have taken the opportunity to look back at how the cholesterol-lowering agent has performed in the marketplace.

The former best-selling drug in the world set a new record in its first month as a generic by falling in price faster and lower than any of its predecessors. Atorvastatin's average trade price, as measured by WaveData, fell rapidly after launch, but the decline followed the same pattern as some of its contemporaries, as Figure 1 at the bottom of the page shows. All of these products had a residual price 11 months after launch of less than 10% of their respective brand's, meaning a price discount of at least 90%.

What made atorvastatin unusual was that this discount was achieved in the first month after launch. "The average prices of various strengths and pack sizes of atorvastatin declined to between 8% and 10% of the equivalent brand value within the first month," commented WaveData's managing director, Charles Joynson. "This was a record, with only quetiapine's average residual price of 12% coming anywhere near it."

After three months, however, atorvastatin's average trade price had stabilised at around 8%, offering a 92% discount to the equivalent Lipitor product. Meanwhile, the cholesterol-lowerer had been overtaken by other new generics, whose average price had continued to fall. Donepezil, olanzapine and anastrozole were offering bigger discounts to their respective brands than atorvastatin, led by donepezil whose average price was just 3% of the brand price. Olanzapine and anastrozole were not far behind, both offering discounts of 95% to their brands.

Putting aside the initial excitement surrounding the launch of atorvastatin, WaveData investigated whether the longer-term price performance of 'fast-moving' generics could be related to each molecule's intrinsic sales 'value'.

Taking the 40 fast-moving generics from the Price Watch's regular basket – category M reimbursement products that have been launched recently – WaveData compared their residual prices at various times after launch with their relative sales values, according to the UK government's 2012 prescription sales figures for England and Wales.

Noting that the products included in Figure 1 had a total sales value to the National Health Service – both as brands and as generics – of £52 million (US\$80 million) in 2012, Joynson pointed out that the trends appeared fairly consistent at one month, three months and 11 months after generic launch (see Figures 2 and 3).

"High-value molecules appear to suffer faster price declines than lower-valued ingredients," observed Joynson. He added, however, that the trend lines were not a tight fit, suggesting that while there appeared to be a relationship between molecule value and its price decline, other factors were at play. "For example," Joynson suggested, "the sales split between brand and generic during 2012 would have influenced the result, as would ease of manufacture, the number of active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) suppliers and many other issues." **G**

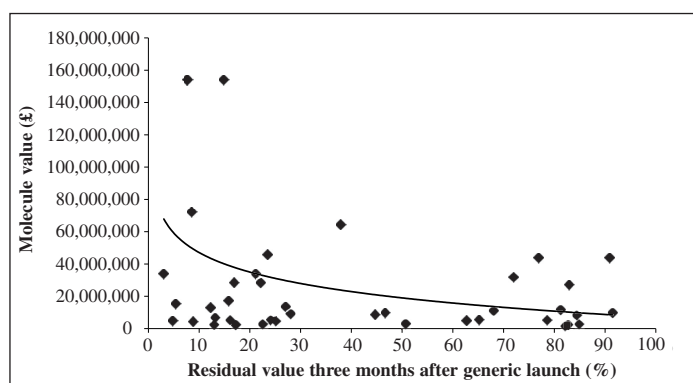


Figure 2: Comparing the percentage price decay three months from generic launch for a basket of 40 'fast-moving' generics with the money spent on each molecule in 2012 by the National Health Service of England and Wales (Source – WaveData)

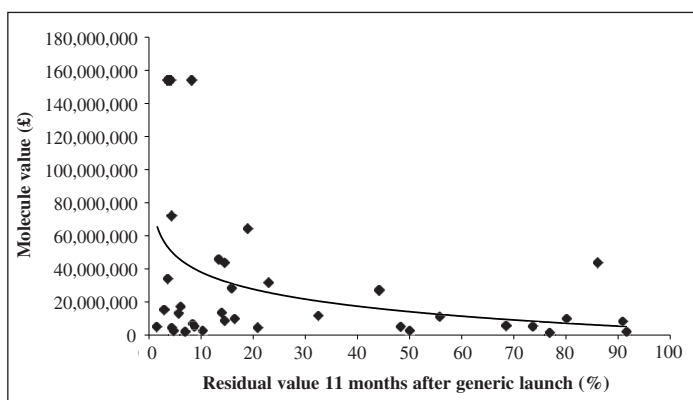


Figure 3: Comparing the percentage price decay 11 months from generic launch for a basket of 40 'fast-moving' generics with the money spent on each molecule in 2012 by the National Health Service of England and Wales (Source – WaveData)

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■ For further information see [www.bppi.co.uk](http://www.bppi.co.uk). Alternatively, contact Charles Joynson at WaveData Limited, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1702 425125. E-mail: [cjoynson@wavedata.co.uk](mailto:cjoynson@wavedata.co.uk).

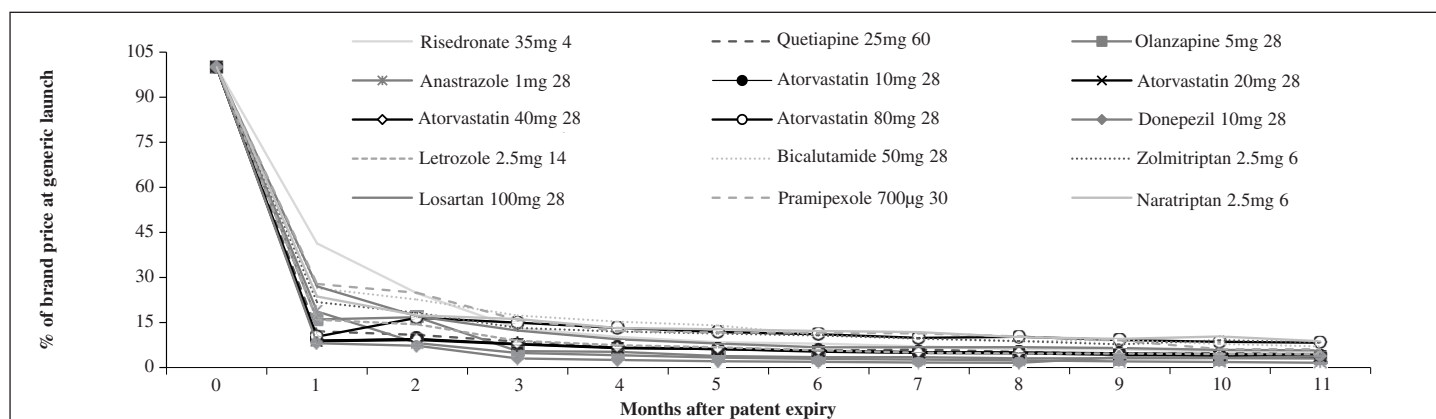



Figure 1: Average monthly price decay after launch – taking the equivalent brand price at generic launch as 100% – of a selected basket of 'fast-moving' generics, described by strength and pack size (Source – WaveData)