

# Ibuprofen Covid-19 Fake News Has Little Effect On Generic OTC Sales

25 Mar 2020 | **DATA**

by David Ridley | @david\_ridleyOTC | David.Ridley@informa.com

## Executive Summary

Despite claims last week that ibuprofen worsened the effects of the coronavirus, prices of generic OTC versions of the drug have continued to rise in the UK, reflecting increased demand, according to market analysts Wavedata.



Source: Shutterstock

Following the news last week linking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen to worsened infection with the coronavirus, you might think that sales of these drugs would be negatively affected.

However, this has not been the case in the UK, according to generic drug market analysts, Wavedata.

Tracing average price trends through UK pharmacy for four different generic OTC ibuprofen products – 200mg tabs in packs of 84, 400mg tabs in packs of 84, 400mg tabs in packs of 24 and 600mg tabs in packs of 84 – Wavedata found that prices have continued to rise, despite the news. (See Figure 1)

# Generic OTC Ibuprofen Price Trends In UK Pharmacy

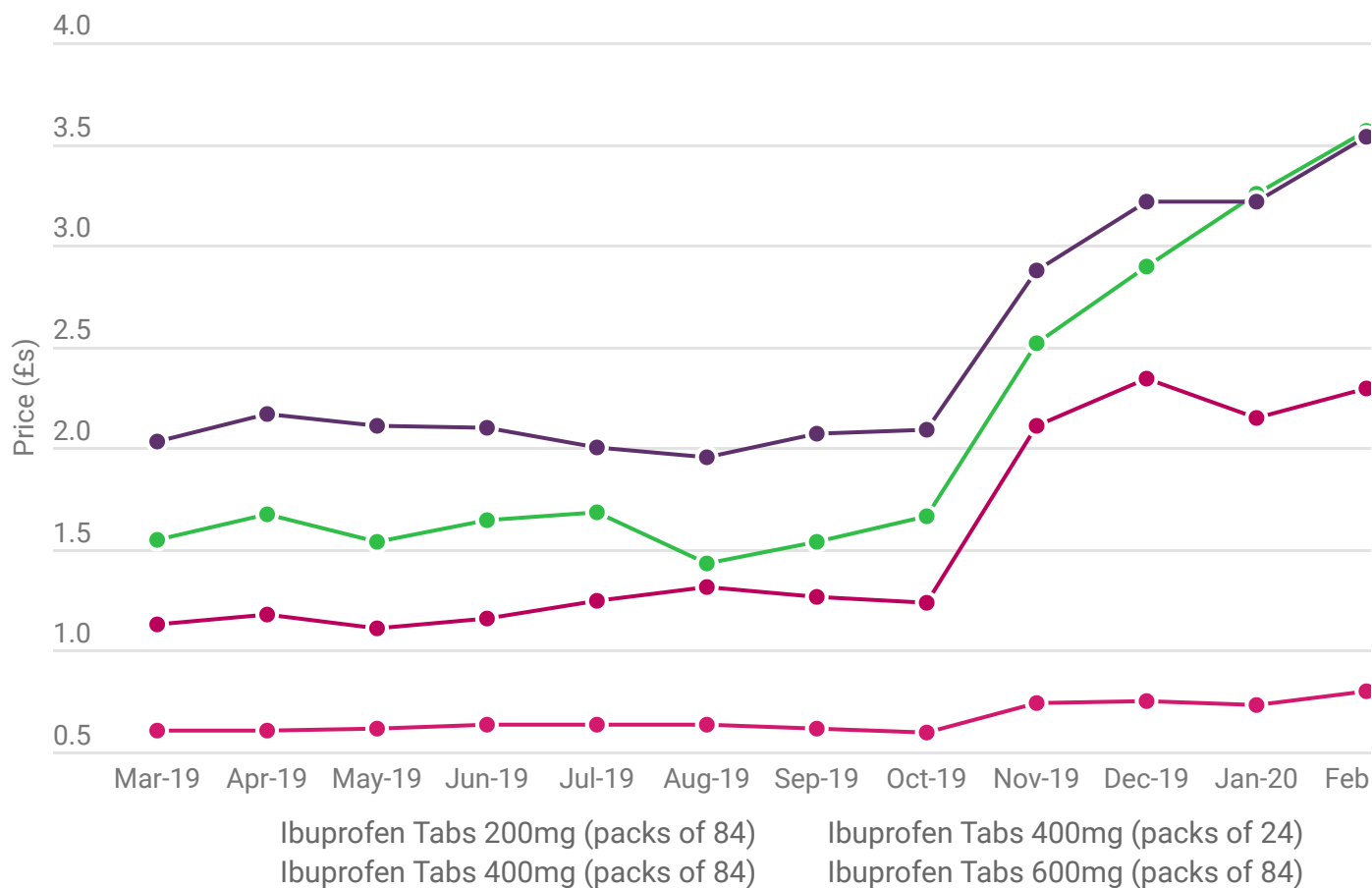


Figure 1: Price of generic OTC ibuprofen in UK pharmacies between March 2019 and March 2020 (Source: Wavedata)

“It was a negative meme, one of these things that goes viral and everyone believes it,” commented Wavedata co-founder, Charles Joynson. “But the extraordinary thing is that the prices have continued to go up.”

“This shows that the news didn’t reach everybody,” he continued. “It reached as far as the Twitterati and some of the mainstream news channels, but a lot of other people didn’t pick up on it and have continued to use the product.”

## Spooky Market Premonitions

Meanwhile, demand for generic paracetamol has continued to intensify, putting immense pressure on the OTC supply chain and driving up prices in the process.

“The product that has gone up the most is the 100mg paracetamol caplets in packs of 100,” Joynson noted. “This rose slightly in February by just a few percent but then shot up like a rocket in March.” (See Figure 2)

Prices of 500mg paracetamol tablets in packs of 100 have also been rising very gradually, he continued. The first sign of movement happened in December, he added, when news of the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China, first appeared.

# Generic OTC Paracetamol Price Trends In UK Pharmacy

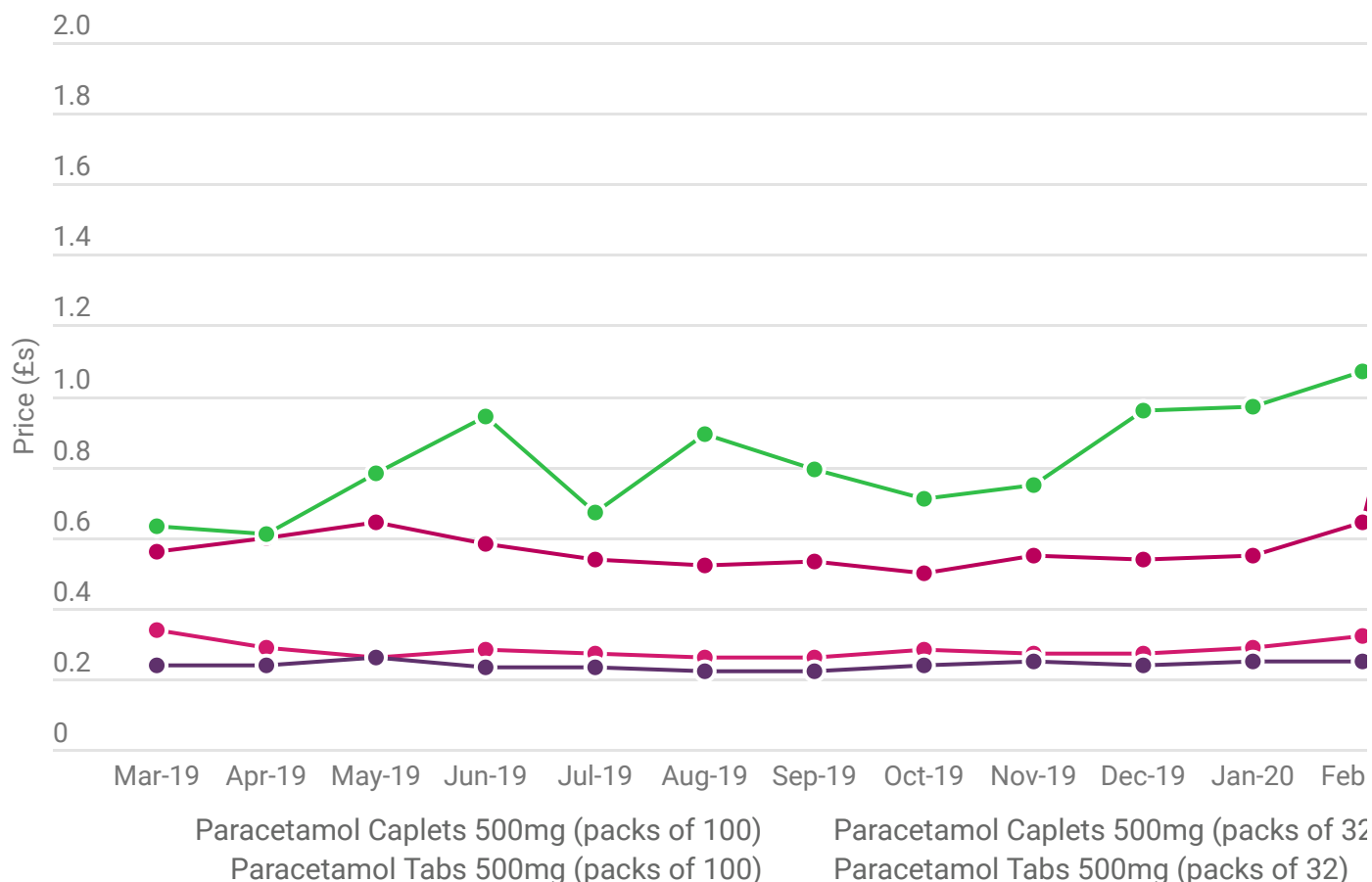


Figure 2: Average price of generic OTC paracetamol in pharmacy between March 2019 and March 2020 (Source: Wavedata)

However, what is strange, Wavedata’s analysis shows, is that both paracetamol and ibuprofen price rises seemed to in some cases anticipate the coronavirus crisis, beginning to rise as far back as November.

“Some changes have been very sudden,” Joynson explained, “but some of them seem to have been rising for some time.”

“That’s very odd,” he reflected. “It’s almost as if the supply chain somehow knew that there would be a problem down the line in the availability of some packs.”