

Only the one way down for risperidone

When we first covered risperidone prices in the UK a few months after launch, it was already clear that generic prices were rapidly heading towards 90% discounts and more to those for the brand, Janssen-Cilag's Risperdal (*Generics bulletin*, 15 February 2008, page 15). About six months after patent expiry, prices are still falling, with the average prices of five of the seven tablet presentations lower so far in June than they were in May, and all of them lower than they had been in April. Six of the seven are shown in Figure 1, excluding 20-tablet packs of risperidone 1mg.

The three largest discounts to the brand were exactly 90% for the 2mg, 3mg and 4mg strengths, but the average price for 20-tablet packs of risperidone 1mg still offered an 87% discount to independent pharmacists and dispensing doctors. And it should be remembered that the lowest prices available in the marketplace were lower still. Almus, for example, was offering 60-tablet packs of risperidone 4mg at £5.98 (US\$11.70) in May – a 96% discount to the brand – which compared with Sandoz' price of £19.85 and Actavis' of £20.45, which were both 85% discounts to the brand price of £133.34.

Currently, 10 companies supply risperidone tablets in the UK in at least one strength of the schizophrenia drug, including Arrow, Teva and Winthrop. Others like Consilient, Krka and Ranbaxy offer dispersible tablet forms instead, while Sandoz offers both. This rivalry is more than enough eventually to produce average tablet prices offering 95% discounts to the brand.

Back in May 2003, when simvastatin was launched, it took a whole year – until May 2004 – for the average price of 28-tablet packs of simvastatin 10mg to reach a 90% discount to the brand price (see Figure 2). Merck, Sharp and Dohme was charging the trade £18.03 for a 28-tablet pack of Zocor 10mg when the average generic price dropped sharply to £1.64 in May 2004. However, the more sedate decline in the average price for generic simvastatin in the early days was not through a lack of competition. As Figure 3 shows, WaveData recorded more than 130 price offers in the marketplace for some simvastatin strengths in May 2004, a number which has not been bettered. But even in June 2003, shortly after launch, there had been over 90.

Today, monthly simvastatin price offers regularly get into the high eighties, and sometimes into the hundreds, with the 40mg strength leading the way of late, hitting 107 in April 2008. And still the prices of simvastatin keep falling (see Figure 4). The average price for the 10mg strength reached an all-time low in May 2008 of just £0.14, or exactly £0.005 a tablet.

A year earlier, 28-tablet packs of simvastatin 10mg were at least £0.20 per pack on average. At this rate, simvastatin will soon be given away as a form of discount on other lines. We have already heard of some short-dated stock – not necessarily of simvastatin – being given away in the UK market. Keeping market share not only at a loss, but with no income at all, is seemingly preferable to disposal costs. **G**

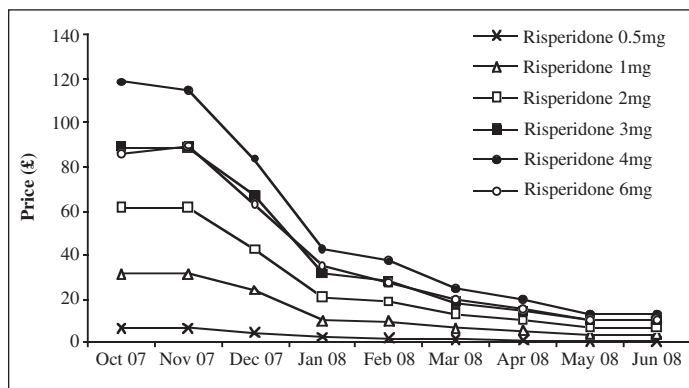


Figure 1: Average monthly prices for generic risperidone since launch last December; pack sizes are 60 tablets, except for 20 x 0.5mg and 28 x 6mg (Source – WaveData)

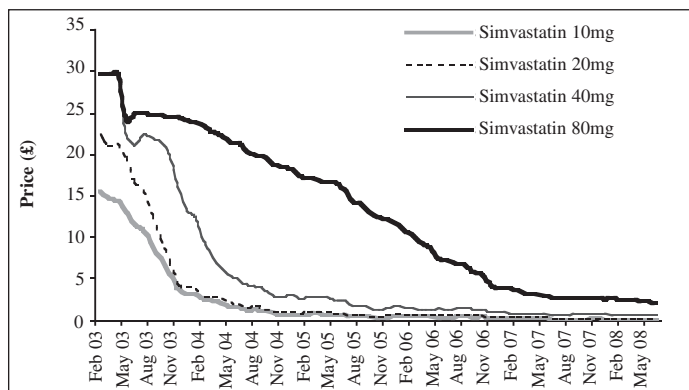


Figure 2: Average monthly prices for 28-tablet packs of generic simvastatin since launch in May 2003 (Source – WaveData)

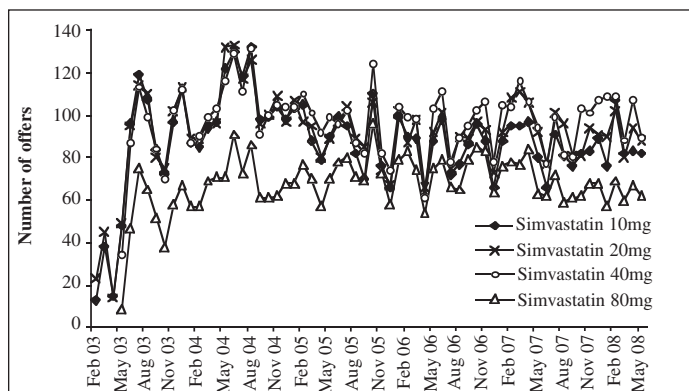


Figure 3: Number of monthly price offers in the marketplace for generic simvastatin since launch in May 2003 (Source – WaveData)

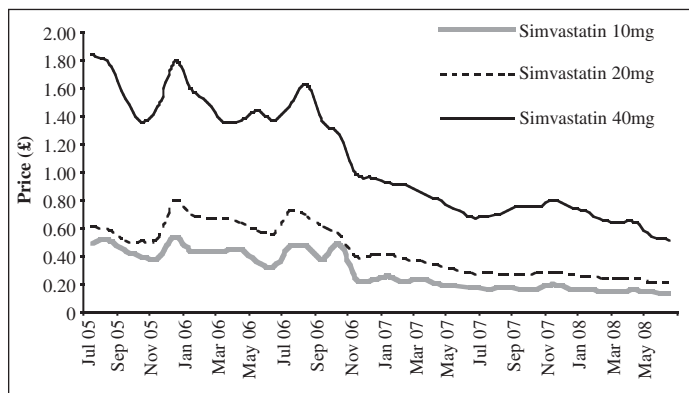


Figure 4: Average monthly prices for 28-tablet packs of generic simvastatin over the past three years (Source – WaveData)

PRICE WATCH UK highlights generics price changes in the UK market and appears exclusively in every issue of *Generics bulletin*, courtesy of the Pharma TouchStone service of WaveData.

WaveData collects and collates pricing information from a number of European countries. In the UK, pricing information about generics, brands and parallel imports is gathered from offers made to independent retail pharmacists and dispensing doctors by wholesalers, suppliers and product manufacturers. WaveData collates this data and publishes the results giving customers fast, accurate, real-time access to current generic prices. WaveData's Profesy price-forecasting tool can be found at www.wavedata.biz.

■ For further information see www.wavedata.net or contact Charles Joynson, WaveData Limited, Concorde House, Comet Way, Eastwood, Essex SS2 6GD, UK Tel: +44 (0)1702 425125; Fax +44(0)1702 425129; E-mail cjoynson@wavedata.co.uk. Website: www.wavedata.co.uk.