

Pfizer's prices push patented pregabalin

Pfizer's attempts to stifle generic competition for its Lyrica brand in the UK seem to be achieving their objective, judging by market prices for the various versions of generic pregabalin that are available.

The brand originator had persuaded the Patents Court to order England's National Health Service (NHS) to issue guidance to the country's 211 clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and to the NHS Business Services Authority, instructing them that pregabalin should only be prescribed for neuropathic pain under Pfizer's Lyrica brand name.

Justice Richard Arnold said requiring the NHS to issue such guidance was the "most efficacious, dissuasive and cheapest solution" to Pfizer's fears that its pain method-of-use patent would be infringed if pharmacists dispensed generics for the patented indication (*Generics bulletin*, 13 March 2015, page 19).

Armed with its court judgement in March, Pfizer has attempted to compete on price with generics from Actavis, Consilient and Dr Reddy's that can be prescribed legally for anxiety disorder and partial epilepsy. As can be seen from three of the four Figures, Lyrica's minimum trade price to independent pharmacists fell in March, when the guidance was issued. And in the case of the 25mg strength, the minimum trade price on offer for Lyrica undercut the lowest generic price by £6.50 (US\$9.67), or by 13% of the generic price (see Figure 1).

Minimum trade prices for the 75mg strength of the brand and the equivalent generic were almost identical (see Figure 2). Pharmacists were reimbursed through the Drug Tariff for dispensing all four strengths of 56-capsule packs of pregabalin at the official trade price of £64.40.

Actavis and Dr Reddy's obtained marketing authorisations for pregabalin – available in eight strengths and 56-count and 84-count packs – in mid-February and launched soon afterwards. Consilient followed suit subsequently. All three generics firms have branded versions under the Lecaent, Alzain and Rewisca names respectively.

The lowest price for Lecaent recorded by WaveData was £52.16, which was the same in March as the lowest generic price for pregabalin 150mg and 300mg strengths (see Figures 3 and 4), as well as for the 75 mg strength. In April, however, the lowest generic price for all four strengths started to undercut the branded generic price.

At £46.99, however, the lowest trade price for generic 56-capsule packs of pregabalin 25mg was still more expensive in the first few weeks of April than the lowest price of £42.50 at which Lyrica 25mg was being offered to independent pharmacists. But among the higher strengths, generic prices started to offer the best value.

The lowest 75mg generic trade price of £49.00 was below that of £50.23 for the equivalent brand strength. Similarly, the lowest generic price for the 150mg strength of £50.99 was lower than £56.67 recorded for the brand. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that after two months on the market, generic prices for pregabalin have fallen less than 30% compared with the official trade price of the equivalent Lyrica product. The lowest generic price for pregabalin 25mg was 27% below the brand's official trade price in early April – and more expensive than the brand's lowest trade price – while the higher 150mg and 300mg strengths only exhibited 21% price erosion.

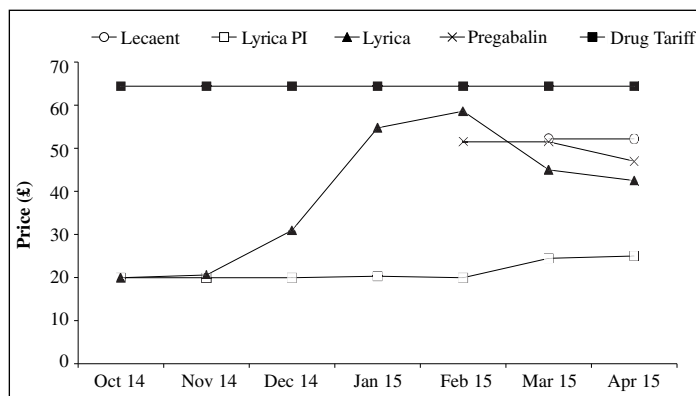


Figure 1: Lowest trade, parallel import and Drug Tariff prices for 56-capsule packs of branded and generic pregabalin 25mg (Source – WaveData)

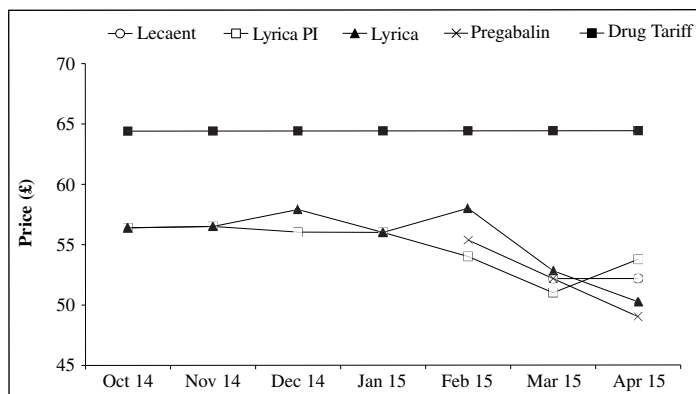


Figure 2: Lowest trade, parallel import and Drug Tariff prices for 56-capsule packs of branded and generic pregabalin 75mg (Source – WaveData)

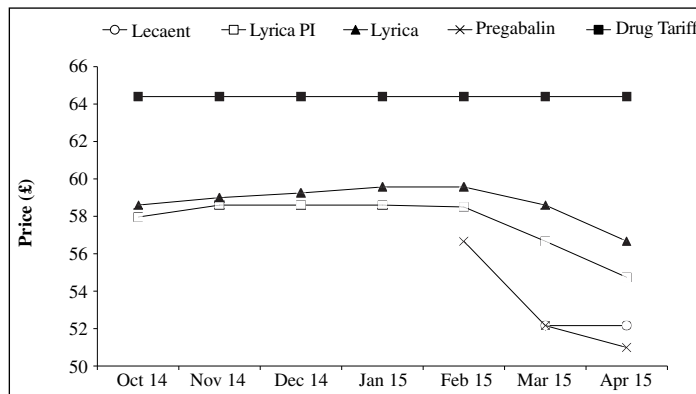


Figure 3: Lowest trade, parallel import and Drug Tariff prices for 56-capsule packs of branded and generic pregabalin 150mg (Source – WaveData)

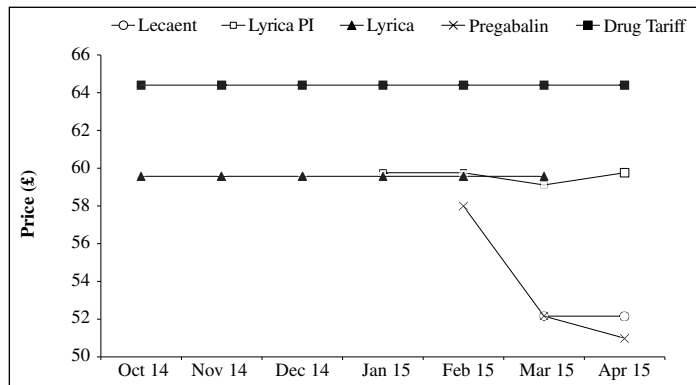


Figure 4: Lowest trade, parallel import and Drug Tariff prices for 56-capsule packs of branded and generic pregabalin 300mg (Source – WaveData)

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