

Isosorbide shortages prompt a reaction

Shortages of all strengths of normal-release isosorbide mononitrate tablets have become so acute in the UK that the government's chief pharmaceutical officer, Dr Keith Rudge, has written to pharmacists. "Problems with the availability of raw materials", he says, mean normal supplies are "unlikely to resume before the end of April 2013".

He recommends substitution with a slow-release mononitrate of the same strength. Community pharmacists who are unable to obtain stock, but are presented with a prescription for normal-release tablets, are advised to refer patients back to their prescriber. "Where the prescriber intends for an unlicensed product to be supplied, the prescription will need to be written in a way that makes this clear," says Rudge, noting that companies are "importing unlicensed isosorbide mononitrate for use on an individual patient basis".

Surprisingly, however, only the isosorbide 10mg strength was granted 'no cheaper stock obtainable' (NCSO) status by the Department of Health in February, despite all three strengths being in short supply, according to Rudge, and as evidenced by Figure 3. Indapamide 2.5mg tablets and trazadone 50mg, 100mg and 150mg capsules were also granted NCSO status, which means pharmacists are may be reimbursed for dispensing a more expensive alternative. Temazepam 10mg and 20mg in 28-tablet packs were granted price concessions of £24 (US\$36.34) and £25, respectively.

Meanwhile, average prices for donepezil 10mg, mirtazapine 45mg and risperidone 2mg all had double-digit rises last month (see Figure 1). These were offset, however, by average prices for ibandronic acid 50mg dropping by almost a third (see Figure 2).

BIGGEST FALLERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Ibandronic acid tabs 50mg 28	£14.95	-5	£37.42	-32
Phenobarbital tabs 60mg 28	£0.30	±0	£0.51	-31
Ofloxacin tabs 200mg 10	£2.45	±0	£3.01	-26
Repaglinide tabs 500µg 30	£0.66	±0	£0.95	-25
Repaglinide tabs 500µg 90	£1.39	+48	£2.54	-23
Betahistine tabs 8mg 120	£2.09	-3	£3.34	-22

BIGGEST RISERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Indapamide tabs 2.5mg 28	£0.69	+60	£5.31	+392
Isosorbide tabs 10mg 56	£1.07	+7	£8.46	+348
Isosorbide tabs 40mg 56	£1.55	+9	£3.93	+118
Senna tabs 7.5mg 60	£0.38	+9	£2.23	+89
Trazodone tabs 150mg 28	£3.49	+8	£20.60	+87
Isosorbide tabs 20mg 56	£1.09	+10	£5.28	+77

Figure 1 (below): Comparison between the periods 1-31 January 2013 and 1-25 February 2013 of the lowest and average UK trade prices of fast-moving generics. Each average price was calculated from at least 32 data points. Figure 2 (above) and Figure 3 (above right): Biggest changes recorded between the periods 1-31

January 2013 and 1-25 February 2013 in lowest and average UK trade prices of about 748 commonly-dispensed generics. The basket specifically excludes the 'fast movers' shown below, but includes other presentations of the same products. Each average price was calculated from at least 20 data points (Source - WaveData).

FAST MOVERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Alfuzosin tabs 2.5mg 60	£4.15	±0	£5.42	+1
Anastrozole tabs 1mg 28	£0.84	-2	£1.53	+4
Atorvastatin tabs 20mg 28	£0.71	+11	£1.00	-8
Bicalutamide tabs 50mg 28	£1.36	+1	£2.12	+4
Buprenorphine tabs 2mg 7	£1.82	±0	£3.17	-3
Candesartan tabs 8mg 28	£1.61	+9	£2.08	±0
Clopidogrel tabs 75mg 28	£0.96	+2	£1.15	-1
Desloratadine tabs 5mg 30	£1.00	-47	£2.91	-11
Donepezil tabs 10mg 28	£0.62	-5	£3.30	+17
Dorzolamide eye drops 2% 5ml	£1.25	-9	£1.97	-1
Esomeprazole tabs 40mg 28	£5.49	+20	£7.48	+2
Exemestane tabs 25mg 30	£3.57	±0	£7.25	+9
Finasteride tabs 5mg 28	£0.58	±0	£0.96	+9
Glimepiride tabs 4mg 30	£0.44	-2	£0.74	+5
Irbesartan tabs 75mg 28	£0.85	-4	£1.50	-7
Lansoprazole caps 30mg 28	£0.84	-1	£0.97	-1
Latanoprost eye drops .005% 2.5ml	£1.09	±0	£1.79	-4
Lercanidipine tabs 10mg 28	£0.61	±0	£1.08	±0
Letrozole tabs 2.5mg 14	£0.92	±0	£1.49	+4
Levetiracetam tabs 500mg 60	£1.85	-2	£3.68	+2
Losartan tabs 100mg 28	£0.59	-5	£0.90	+2
Mirtazapine orodisp. tabs 45mg 30	£1.29	-7	£1.97	+10
Mycophenolate tabs 500mg 50	£4.35	+5	£6.89	+3
Naratriptan tabs 2.5mg 6	£1.08	+4	£2.10	-3
Nebivolol tabs 5mg 28	£0.92	±0	£1.43	±0

FAST MOVERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Olanzapine tabs 5mg 28	£0.49	-14	£0.97	+2
Perindopril tabs 4mg 30	£0.76	-6	£1.12	-3
Pioglitazone tabs 15mg 28	£0.75	-20	£1.80	-10
Pramipexole tabs 700µg 30	£1.45	+17	£3.00	-17
Quetiapine tabs 25mg 60	£0.86	-3	£1.46	-5
Risedronate tabs 35mg 4	£0.33	±0	£0.59	-2
Risperidone tabs 2mg 60	£0.69	+5	£1.21	+18
Sumatriptan tabs 100mg 6	£0.91	-2	£1.43	+3
Terbinafine cream 1% 15g	£0.94	±0	£1.43	+5
Tolterodine tabs 2mg 56	£2.60	-22	£4.27	-10
Topiramate tabs 25mg 60	£0.76	-4	£1.62	-2
Trandolapril caps 2mg 28	£0.99	-4	£1.50	-2
Valsartan caps 80mg 28	£0.85	-6	£1.78	+1
Venlafaxine tabs 75mg 56	£1.64	±0	£2.19	-5
Zolmitriptan tabs 2.5mg 6	£0.49	-9	£1.65	+9

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