

Lower venlafaxine prices boost pharmacy

Independent pharmacists and dispensing doctors in England and Wales must have been rubbing their hands with glee last month as the average trade prices for venlafaxine XL capsules fell by double-digit amounts and their profit margins increased accordingly.

Both the 75mg and 150mg strengths of the 'modified-release' products are still in category C of the Drug Tariff reimbursement list. This is based on the trade price of the originator, namely Wyeth's (now Pfizer's) Efexor XL. So while pharmacists could buy 28-capsule packs of the 75mg strength for £0.90 (US\$1.44) on average last month – after an 11% price fall since July (see Figure 1) – they were getting £22.08 for dispensing them, a profit margin of 96%. By the same measure, the generic was selling in the trade for just 4% of the brand price.

Similarly, the 150mg strength offered pharmacists a 95% profit

margin on a brand price of £36.81 per 28-capsule pack. This increased to 97% if pharmacists managed to secure supplies of the antidepressant at the lowest price the 150mg strength was available. The cheapest price for the 75mg strength, meanwhile, represented a brand discount – or pharmacy profit margin – of 98%.

Elsewhere amongst the 'fast movers', monthly price changes were modest, with the exception of citalopram, whose prices are settling down after the recent product shortages that have been well-documented in these pages. Ramipril 10mg capsules featured in Figure 1 followed the general trend, but tablet versions were among the biggest fallers (see Figure 2). Pack size mattered for ciprofloxacin 500mg as the average price of the 10-tablet pack rose slightly, but that of the 20-tablet pack grew by nearly a fifth (see Figure 3). G

BIGGEST FALLERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Prednisolone tabs 5mg 28	£0.89	-23	£2.18	-17
Ramipril tabs 10mg 28	£0.30	-25	£0.89	-16
Ranitidine tabs 150mg 60	£0.84	±0	£1.48	-15
Gabapentin caps 300mg 100	£3.49	-30	£6.39	-14
Cetirizine tabs 10mg 30	£0.18	±0	£0.55	-14
Ramipril tabs 1.25mg 28	£0.34	-13	£0.77	-13

Figure 1 (below): Comparison between the periods 1-31 July 2011 and 1-31 August 2011 of the lowest and average UK trade prices of fast-moving generics. Each average price was calculated from at least 20 data points. Figure 2 (above) and Figure 3 (above right): Biggest changes recorded between the periods 1-31 July

BIGGEST RISERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Metronidazole tabs 400mg 21	£0.40	±0	£1.33	+50
Diazepam tabs 2mg 28	£0.13	±0	£0.24	+40
Diazepam tabs 5mg 28	£0.14	±0	£0.26	+36
Betahistine tabs 8mg 120	£1.08	±0	£2.05	+29
Paracetamol sol. tabs 500mg 60	£2.49	+2	£4.19	+29
Ciprofloxacin tabs 500mg 20	£0.60	+62	£0.80	+19

2011 and 1-31 August 2011 in lowest and average UK trade prices of about 120 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 31 data points (Source – WaveData).

FAST MOVERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Alendronate tabs 70mg 4	£0.32	+33	£0.39	-3
Amlodipine tabs 10mg 28	£0.22	±0	£0.31	-3
Carvedilol tabs 12.5mg 28	£0.49	±0	£0.62	-3
Ciprofloxacin tabs 500mg 10	£0.23	-18	£0.36	+1
Citalopram tabs 20mg 28	£0.35	-36	£0.89	-31
Clarithromycin tabs 250mg 14	£0.69	-13	£1.40	-4
Clopidogrel tabs 75mg 30	£1.02	-6	£1.52	-4
Enalapril tabs 20mg 28	£0.26	±0	£0.35	-1
Finasteride tabs 5mg 28	£0.85	-11	£1.33	+2
Fluoxetine caps 20mg 30	£0.19	±0	£0.38	+5
Fosinopril tabs 20mg 28	£1.41	-11	£1.91	±0
Glimepiride tabs 4mg 30	£0.57	-5	£0.83	±0
Lamotrigine tabs 100mg 56	£1.95	-7	£2.87	-1
Lansoprazole caps 30mg 28	£0.78	-6	£0.92	-2
Lisinopril tabs 20mg 28	£0.35	-5	£0.46	+1
Losartan tabs 50mg 28	£0.39	±0	£0.58	-2
Losartan tabs 100mg 28	£0.39	-3	£0.73	+2
Metformin tabs 500mg 84	£0.46	-2	£0.69	±0
Mirtazapine tabs 30mg 28	£0.69	-8	£1.16	-2
Omeprazole caps 20mg 28	£0.52	-9	£0.69	-3
Ondansetron tabs 4mg 30	£2.48	-7	£4.10	±0
Pantoprazole tabs 20mg 28	£0.41	+2	£0.63	-7
Paroxetine tabs 20mg 30	£0.89	-2	£1.20	-3
Pramipexole tabs 180µg 30	£0.96	-3	£2.56	-4
Pramipexole tabs 700µg 30	£4.79	+7	£8.82	-5

FAST MOVERS				
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)
Pravastatin tabs 40mg 28	£1.17	-6	£1.48	-5
Ramipril caps 10mg 28	£0.51	±0	£0.64	-3
Risedronate tabs 35mg 4	£0.75	+1	£1.16	-4
Risperidone tabs 2mg 60	£0.69	±0	£1.29	-6
Sertraline tabs 100mg 28	£1.40	-26	£6.38	-9
Simvastatin tabs 20mg 28	£0.22	-12	£0.34	-6
Simvastatin tabs 40mg 28	£0.37	-5	£0.49	-3
Sumatriptan tabs 50mg 6	£0.58	-2	£0.96	+3
Tamsulosin caps 400µg 30	£0.79	-4	£1.00	-4
Terbinafine tabs 250mg 14	£1.01	-5	£1.38	-2
Topiramate tabs 50mg 60	£1.41	-9	£2.79	-8
Topiramate tabs 100mg 60	£2.31	-4	£3.72	-5
Venlafaxine tabs 37.5mg 56	£1.69	+17	£2.30	+3
Venlafaxine XL caps 75mg 28	£0.50	-7	£0.90	-11
Venlafaxine XL caps 150mg 28	£1.09	-9	£1.72	-13

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