

Tolbutamide takes off after shortages

Prices for 28-tablet packs of tolbutamide 500mg took off in December, having been on the rise since last September. As Figure 3 shows, the product's average price rose by a staggering 295% during the last month of 2011 to £22.13 (US\$34.28). This followed three months of far more modest rises, starting with a 60% uplift during September to £3.13 (**Generics bulletin**, 14 October 2011, page 21). Average price increases of 38% and 15% followed in October and November, although only the last – and smallest – of these uplifts merited top spot in our monthly table of 'biggest risers'.

Meanwhile, the Department of Health (DoH) had granted 'no cheaper stock obtainable' (NCSO) status to the product in October, which was subsequently confirmed both in November and December. When a generic product has gone short in the market or the product

has been discontinued by the manufacturer – and there is a more expensive alternative product available – the DoH may grant a NCSO concession for that month only. This allows pharmacists to dispense a more expensive alternative and be reimbursed accordingly.

The other option open to the DoH is to grant a price concession on a particular product for the month. Of the three products granted a concession in December, 28-tablet packs of nitrazepam 5mg also appear in Figure 3 after a 128% increase in their average price.

Elsewhere, December was a quiet month for price changes. Few double-digit movements appear in Figure 1, and these are outnumbered by the number of prices which showed no difference at all. Notable among the average price fallers was fosinopril. Prices for the 20mg strength fell by 14%, while the 10mg version lost 17% (see Figure 2). **G**

BIGGEST FALLERS					
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)	
Co-proxamol tabs 32.5/325mg 100	£3.99	+4	£5.59	-21	
Fosinopril tabs 10mg 28	£0.92	±0	£1.52	-17	
Furosemide tabs 20mg 28	£0.11	±0	£0.15	-12	
Amoxicillin 125mg/5ml 100ml	£0.38	+3	£0.55	-12	
Lamotrigine tabs 100mg 56	£3.00	±0	£4.39	-10	
Amoxicillin 250mg/5ml 100ml	£0.44	+7	£0.71	-9	

BIGGEST RISERS					
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)	
Tolbutamide tabs 500mg 28	£14.98	+578	£22.13	+295	
Nitrazepam tabs 5mg 28	£0.20	+18	£0.81	+128	
Penicillamine tabs 125mg 56	£8.38	-6	£14.25	+20	
Famotidine tabs 40mg 28	£1.28	±0	£3.93	+19	
Famotidine tabs 20mg 28	£0.89	-26	£3.35	+17	
Bumetanide tabs 5mg 28	£1.15	+16	£2.24	+17	

Figure 1 (below): Comparison between the periods 1-30 November 2011 and 1-31 December 2011 of the lowest and average UK trade prices of fast-moving generics. Each average price was calculated from at least 17 data points. Figure 2 (above) and Figure 3 (above right): Biggest changes recorded between the periods 1-30

November 2011 and 1-31 December 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 15 data points (Source – WaveData).

FAST MOVERS					
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)	
Alendronate tabs 70mg 4	£0.21	-5	£0.31	-1	
Amlodipine tabs 10mg 28	£0.20	-5	£0.28	-3	
Carvedilol tabs 12.5mg 28	£0.44	-6	£0.71	+1	
Ciprofloxacin tabs 500mg 10	£0.30	±0	£0.40	-4	
Citalopram tabs 20mg 28	£0.24	±0	£0.50	+9	
Clarithromycin tabs 250mg 14	£0.48	-4	£1.24	-5	
Clopidogrel tabs 75mg 30	£1.09	±0	£1.37	-1	
Enalapril tabs 20mg 28	£0.26	±0	£0.36	+6	
Finasteride tabs 5mg 28	£0.85	-1	£1.05	-1	
Fluoxetine caps 20mg 30	£0.15	-25	£0.29	-3	
Fosinopril tabs 20mg 28	£1.41	-4	£1.85	-14	
Glimepiride tabs 4mg 30	£0.51	-6	£0.81	-1	
Lamotrigine tabs 100mg 56	£1.76	-10	£2.40	-2	
Lansoprazole caps 30mg 28	£0.75	-4	£0.88	-1	
Lisinopril tabs 20mg 28	£0.30	-3	£0.40	-5	
Losartan tabs 50mg 28	£0.35	+6	£0.51	±0	
Losartan tabs 100mg 28	£0.39	+3	£0.72	+13	
Metformin tabs 500mg 84	£0.45	±0	£0.63	±0	
Mirtazapine tabs 30mg 28	£0.79	+1	£1.01	-8	
Omeprazole caps 20mg 28	£0.54	-5	£0.65	-2	
Ondansetron tabs 4mg 30	£2.25	-4	£3.95	+4	
Pantoprazole tabs 20mg 28	£0.41	±0	£0.52	-5	
Paroxetine tabs 20mg 30	£0.80	-4	£1.04	±0	
Pramipexole tabs 180µg 30	£0.77	±0	£1.49	+2	
Pramipexole tabs 700µg 30	£2.54	+4	£4.83	±0	

FAST MOVERS					
Product/Strength/Pack size	Lowest price	Change (%)	Average price	Change (%)	
Pravastatin tabs 40mg 28	£0.83	-13	£1.27	-4	
Ramipril caps 10mg 28	£0.47	±0	£0.57	-1	
Risedronate tabs 35mg 4	£0.56	-5	£0.76	-9	
Risperidone tabs 2mg 60	£0.69	±0	£1.16	-3	
Sertraline tabs 100mg 28	£0.62	-10	£1.31	-30	
Simvastatin tabs 20mg 28	£0.21	-5	£0.26	+1	
Simvastatin tabs 40mg 28	£0.29	-3	£0.41	±0	
Sumatriptan tabs 50mg 6	£0.65	±0	£0.92	±0	
Tamsulosin caps 400µg 30	£0.73	-3	£0.93	±0	
Terbinafine tabs 250mg 14	£0.94	+9	£1.20	-2	
Topiramate tabs 50mg 60	£1.22	-8	£2.23	-7	
Topiramate tabs 100mg 60	£2.04	-3	£3.19	-6	
Venlafaxine tabs 37.5mg 56	£1.64	-1	£2.13	-4	
Venlafaxine XL caps 75mg 28	£0.45	-8	£0.77	-10	
Venlafaxine XL caps 150mg 28	£1.29	+1	£1.76	+4	

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