

Prices wax as Becotide withdraws

GlaxoSmithKline's decision to discontinue its Becotide and Becloforte range of chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) metered-dose beclometasone dipropionate inhalers during the summer had a dramatic effect on product prices in May and June, as followers of Price Watch would have noticed in our 8 June and 13 July editions.

Three of the four beclometasone 200-dose strengths – 50µg, 100µg and 250µg – came top of the 'biggest risers' table for May, with average price increases of up to 50% and more compared with April. And the next month, the 50µg and 250µg strengths featured again with price increases almost as high.

The average price of the weakest 50µg product was £1.64 (US\$3.28) in April, but it had risen to £3.68 by June. Similarly, independent pharmacists and dispensing doctors were paying £10.47 for the strongest 250µg version in June when they had been paying £5.64 on average for the same product two months earlier. The recent price activity for the four available strengths can be seen in Figures 1-4.

GSK had decided to discontinue the Becotide and Becloforte products in the UK as it had been unsuccessful in securing licences for dose-equivalent CFC-free metered-dose inhalers, and there were already two other CFC-free beclometasone inhalers on the market – Qvar from Teva and Clenil Modulite from Trinity-Chiesi. Teva, however, said it would also continue to supply its Beclazone CFC-containing range of inhalers.

According to price information from WaveData, there were at least five generic firms supplying some or all of the beclometasone strengths in June. In addition to Teva, there was Almus, the Merck subsidiary Generics UK and Neolab. Ranbaxy was offering its Easyhaler dry-powder beclometasone inhaler as a CFC-free alternative. Existing stock of Becotide inhalers was also available from wholesalers, as well as some pre-Teva product carrying its original Ivax name.

The British government is committed to phasing out CFC-containing products as a signatory of the Montreal Protocol. However, the changeover to hydrofluoroalkane (HFA) or other non-CFC propellants has taken much longer than was originally expected for beclometasone inhalers. The move has also been complicated by the fact that the second non-CFC product introduced last year by Trinity-Chiesi is not equivalent to Teva's Qvar. This was highlighted by a warning letter from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (**Generics bulletin**, 18 August 2006, page 20).

GlaxoSmithKline originally gave a year's notice last autumn that it would withdraw its beclometasone brands in the UK from the third quarter of 2007, but in the event it announced the products would be discontinued in May. With two CFC-free alternatives now on the market, it cannot be long before the changeover to CFC-free beclometasone inhalers is finally completed. In the meantime, however, suppliers are enjoying prices in the market that have remained steady at their elevated post-June levels.

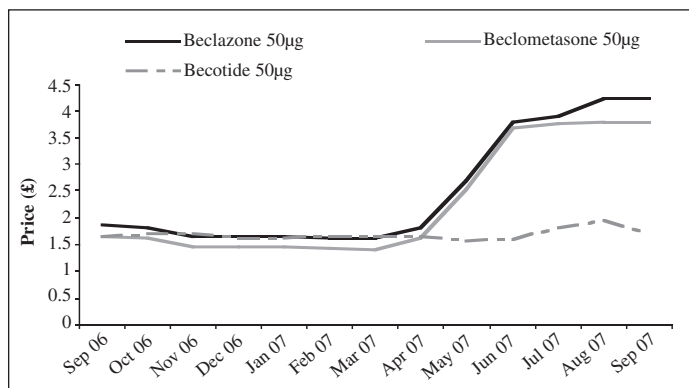


Figure 1: Average monthly prices for beclometasone 50µg as Teva's Beclazone, GlaxoSmithKline's Becotide and generics in 200-dose inhalers (Source – WaveData)

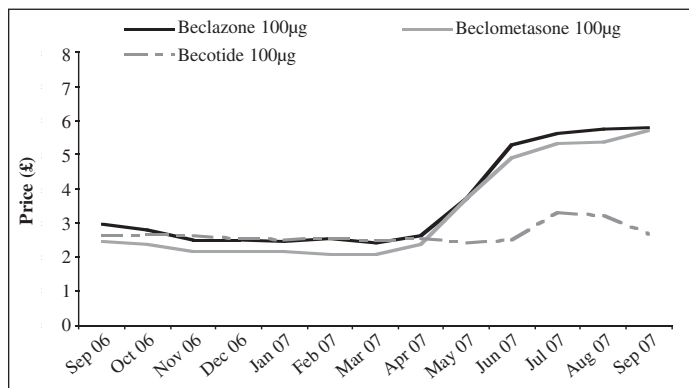


Figure 2: Average monthly prices for beclometasone 100µg as Teva's Beclazone, GlaxoSmithKline's Becotide and generics in 200-dose inhalers (Source – WaveData)

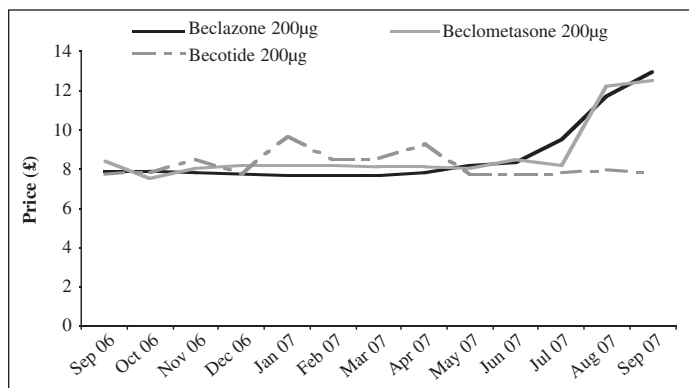


Figure 3: Average monthly prices for beclometasone 200µg as Teva's Beclazone, GlaxoSmithKline's Becotide and generics in 200-dose inhalers (Source – WaveData)

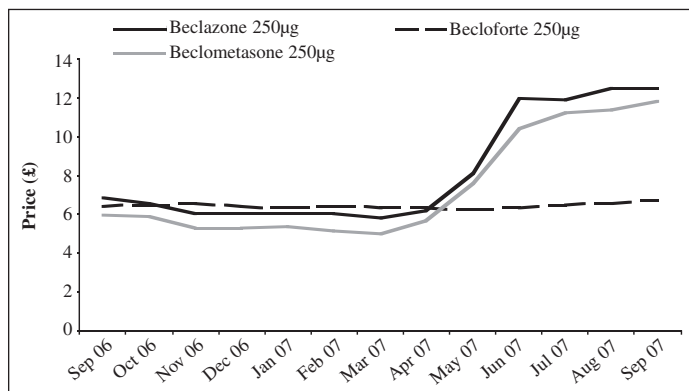


Figure 4: Average monthly prices for beclometasone 250µg as Teva's Beclazone, GlaxoSmithKline's Becloforte and generics in 200-dose inhalers (Source – WaveData)

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.

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