

Prescription of Generic Drugs

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Healthcare cost is one of the major obstacles for healthcare providers. One of the major components of this increased cost of healthcare related expenses is cost of Medicines. Medicines consume major chunk of total money spent on healthcare. Penetration of health insurance is very negligible in our country. Majority of patients have to bear cost of healthcare services on their own. News report published in times of India states that in India 78 % patients spent money on health services out of pocket and among these 72 % is for medicines. It further states that residents of smaller states have to spend out of pocket money up to 87 % for health care services. While in larger states this proportion goes up to 74 %.^[1]

According to WHO generic medicines are those medicines which are manufactured without licence from original innovator manufacturer and usually manufactured after expiry of patent or exclusive rights.^[2] Generic medicines are equally efficacious but cheaper in comparison to branded medicines. According to press information bureau, government of India, Diclofenac tablets, which are commonly prescribed analgesic medicine, average price of its 10 tablet blister is 52 Rs, while their generic counter parts are costing just 3.35 rupees per 10 tablets. So, in this case price difference is more than 15 times. Same is the case in other medicines also.^[3]

Recently government has taken many steps to reduce healthcare cost. Supreme Court of India has directed government to regularize cost of essential medicines which are included in

essential medicine list of India. Government of India has also started Jan aushadhi store which are offering affordable health care by offering quality medicines at affordable price. There are Jan Aushadhi stores in 8 states of India on pilot bases and they are gaining popularity.^[4] Promotion of generic medicine is very important for India as well as other developing countries for their healthcare policy. Even though various agencies are promoting generic medicines, they are still under-utilized. India is one of the leading manufacturers of generic medicines. Indian generics are backbone of health policies of many developing countries.

It was thought that generics are important for developing countries or patients who cannot afford branded medicines, but developed countries are also promoting generic medicines. Government agencies and insurance companies are promoting generic medicines. In many western and some Asian countries pharmacist are given power to substitute branded medicines with generic medicines at the time of dispensing medicines. There are pro and cons of generic substitutions. Generic substitution can substantially decrease cost of medicines. Wherever generic substitution was not permitted choice of medicine lies with prescriber. Doctors chose their preferred brand of medicines. They can ensure quality and efficacy by prescribing particular brand of medicine. While in case of generic but in many studies consumer perceive that generics are for patients who cannot afford branded medicines. They are inferior in quality and efficacy to branded medicines. There are

some facts and fictions behind consumers such perceived behaviour about generic drugs.^[5]

Many consumers feel generics are promoted for those who cannot afford branded alternatives. Along with promotion of generic medicine there is emergence of counterfeit medicines. Counterfeit medicines are those medicines which are substituted for generics or branded medicines. They do not have medicinal properties, they are given/substituted only for profit of manufacturers and they do so with the help of loop holes in healthcare systems. In many African countries where branded drugs are allowed to be substituted by generics, instead of generics they are substituted with generics. That can lead to treatment failure and will further increase cost of healthcare services.^[6]

On the contrary generics are safer alternatives to branded medicines. If passed under stringent tests for quality and efficacy, generics are like boons to healthcare agencies, consumers, insurers who want better cost effectiveness for medicines. Widespread use of generic medicine can immensely benefit patients of chronic diseases like Diabetes mellitus, Hypertension. As, they are on lifelong therapy, reduction in cost of medicines is helpful for short term as well as on long term basis.^[5]

In current scenario in our awareness for generic drugs is very less in various stakeholders concerned with use of medicines. I.e. Consumers, Prescribers, Pharmacists and suppliers. Studies of Indian scenario in this context are very few. So, reasons for unawareness can be assumed. Consumers are less aware, reasons may be they've got no power for selection of medicines. Many a times doctors are driven by promotional activities of pharmaceutical companies, under this pressure there are chances that they may prescribe branded drugs. In case of pharma industry, Indian pharma industry is considered as one of the leading exporter of generics in developing countries, but their contribution in promotion of generics in India is very less. There are various studies done for prescription audit shows that generic drugs are not prescribed

frequently.^[7-10] So, overall promotion and awareness of generic medicines has to be increased in all the stakeholders concerned with generic medicines.

In this issue of journal articles exploring various aspects of physiology, pharmacy and pharmacology are published.^[11-26] Articles related to cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, medical education, oxidative stress and free radicals are highlights of this issue. As editorial board member we hope to receive more manuscripts in future and we are committed to publish high quality article on fast track basis so that the time gap between research and dissemination of that research to stake holders can be decreased.

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