

Chapter – 7

Summary

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PRESCRIPTION OF GENERIC DRUGS: IMPACT ON PHARMA MARKETING, DISPENSATION OF MEDICINES & SOCIAL GOOD

Introduction

Generic medicines play a vital role in bringing down the cost of treatment as they are less expensive choices compared to the originators' brand or brand-name alternatives. The use of generics is all the more critical specially in countries such as India where out-of-pocket expenses towards purchase of medicines by patients is one of the highest in the world, besides, majority of the population in India lives in rural areas where accessibility & affordability are other major challenges. It is not only patients who are benefitted with the use of generics but also provides a respite to policy makers in effective managing of increasing healthcare budgets.

Doctors play an important role in prescribing medicines for the treatment of medical ailment of patients. To prescribe branded drugs or by generic names is the decision of a doctor. There are numerous challenges with generic medicine prescription obstructing its popularity attributed to several factors related to general population, chemists, prescribers, regulations and marketing of branded medicines by pharma companies. The Centre's directive to 'as far as possible prescribe generic drugs' has not gathered full support of doctors mostly in the private sector. The purpose of the study was to evaluate knowledge, attitude and practice of doctors in a primary, secondary and tertiary care hospitals in government and private hospitals in Dehradun

District, Uttarakhand concerning generic medicines to identify factors that encourages or obstructs prescription of generic medicines.

Objective & Methodology

The study is an attempt to find out the relationship between knowledge, attitude, practice and prescription of generic drugs by the medical practitioners and bring forth suggestions including marketing aspects of generic medicines that the pharmaceutical companies need to take into consideration that may lead to increase in prescribing of generic medicines.

The sample data from a descriptive, cross-sectional study using self-administered questionnaire in Likert-type scale conducted among 228 doctors practicing in primary, secondary, and tertiary care centers of Dehradun district of Uttarakhand in 2020 was analyzed using SPSS 25.

Notable research findings

The research findings supported most of the proposed hypotheses. Spearman's rank correlation was found to be positively correlated between knowledge, attitude, practice and prescription of generic medicines indicating a significant association between them. The findings reinforced a tri- component model that knowledge (cognitive) of generic medicines, attitude (affective) towards generic medicines and prescription practice (conative) have a significant influence on doctors prescribing generic medicines. A narrative view is given below.

Knowledge- A majority of doctors (78.5%) agreed to having knowledge about dosage, composition and indications of generic medicines being identical to branded or

innovator medications. 46.5% of respondents have the knowledge on therapeutically equivalence with each other of all generics. The majority of doctors (66.7%) know that generics can be interchanged with innovator / branded medicines. Less than 50% of doctors (43.4 %) are aware that generic medicines can only be introduced after the patent expires. 54.2% of doctors know little or nothing of Jan Aushadhi scheme. 89.9% of doctors are aware of the guidelines given by IMC to prescribe medicines by generic names. Less than 50% of the doctors (46.4%) know that generic medicines are bioequivalent to brand-name medicines.

Attitude – It was found that less than 50% of respondents (38.3%) believe that generic medicines work like the innovator drugs, but when it comes to generic performance in Jan Aushadhi's program, 34.2% of doctors believe generic medicines are as effective as original drugs whereas majority of the doctors (40.8%) which being the highest neutral response amongst all the items, have neither a positive nor negative response. 54.4% of doctors believe that medicines of multinational companies are superior in quality over local companies. Majority of the doctors (75.9%), believe that not all domestic companies have a good reputation. More than 50% of physicians (53.5%) believe that branded drugs are required to meet the highest levels of safety over generic medicine. 42.8% of physicians believe that drug companies engaged in promotion, influence prescription pattern of medical practitioners while 46.3% of physicians have the opposite belief. Overwhelmingly, 83.4% of respondents (second positive response to attitude items) believe that physicians should be educated more on generic drugs. Most doctors (52.2%) are of the view that of healthcare professionals, pharmacists are the most important to give recommendation on generic drugs. 62.8% of doctors say

the hospital budget influences their choice of medication. Overwhelmingly, 90.8% of physicians (highest positive response of attitude items) believe that more confidence should be built among physicians about generics. About one-third of physicians (29.4%) believe that brand-name drugs are commonly manufactured in modern manufacturing facilities and generics in below the required standards and other equal number of respondents have a neutral view.

Practice - Most doctors (75%) oppose incentives for prescribing generics. 54% agree that generic medicines should not replace their branded prescriptions. 76% of doctors support patients' right to choose generic alternatives over branded drugs. There is hesitation among 69% of doctors about prescribing generics in certain diseases. According to 93% of respondents, their prescriptions are influenced by their personal experiences with medicine. Approximately 55% doctors do not agree with being influenced by patient demands in prescribing medicines. When prescribing medicines, 80% of physicians take into account the socio-economic status of their patients. 75 percent of doctors do not prescribe branded drugs due to easy recall of brand names. In prescribing medicines, 71% do not get influenced by medical representatives. 93% prescribe medicines that are easily available. A total of 41% (agree) and 37% (disagree) responded as to whether generic medicines changed the outcome of therapy. It is estimated that 71% doctors have not read any article comparing branded and generic medicines in terms of efficacy and safety. Almost 90% of doctors are in favor of seminars to promote generic medicines. The majority of respondents (92%) agreed that the use of published literature would increase their confidence in prescribing

generic medicines. The majority of doctors (61%) oppose mandatory prescriptions of generic drugs.

It has been concluded with the findings from the study that knowledge, attitude and practice of generic medicines amongst medical practitioners has an influence on prescribing generic medicines. Low prescription of generic medicines can be explained by overall insufficient knowledge of generic medicines, attitude towards generic medicines, medicine prescribing practice that favors prescribing branded medicines.

The areas which stand out in the research study are concern for safety & efficacy of generics and negative attitude towards generics which may be largely attributed to lack of knowledge on bioequivalence and non-promotion of generics.

The insights from the study calls for holistic approach in addressing the issue of low patronage of generics amongst doctors. Quality with a focus on bioequivalence of generics demonstrating quality at par with the branded medicines seems to be the best way forward augmented with strengthening of regulatory environment, promotion, labelling for easier identification of generics, and harmonization of trade margins for generics & branded medicines limiting dispensation / substitution of selective products based on unreasonable profit margins being enjoyed by chemists by way of heavy discounts by pharmaceutical companies on products not promoted to doctors.

Perspective of pharma companies in the marketing of generics is an area that needs to be looked into. In addition to manufacturing and distribution, brand management strategy and promotion to doctors have been an area of focus of leading companies to

obtain the prescription by its brand name. The strategy on brand management enables companies to differentiate products from others. The question arises, how a pharma company can differentiate products in generic names? In other words, how generics need to be promoted to doctors? Prescription in generic names will be filled by chemists who will like to dispense those identical products on which they can make more money and not necessarily the generic medicine being promoted of a particular company. May be prescription written in generic name followed by a company name may be the solution!