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Since 2002 generic substitution has been obligatory to the cheapest available product when dispensing prescribed drugs to patients at Swedish pharmacies unless there are concerns. The Medical Products Agency in Sweden approves specific generic products based on their bioequivalence to the original brand product. Only a few drugs have not been approved for obligatory generic substitution. As a result, generic substitution is non-controversial and well-accepted by patients, prescribers, drug companies and politicians in Sweden. This trust relies on availability of high-quality generic products.

This reform has enforced price competition between generic products and the original brand product with patients paying the difference for a more expensive product than the reference price. As a result, prices for multiple sourced products decreased rapidly after patent expiry. Overall, prices for high volume generics typically range between 5 to 13% of the prices pre-patent loss. Swedish generic drug prices are consequently among the lowest in Europe.

A high use of generics is achieved also by selecting generic drugs as first line recommendations by the Drug and Therapeutics Committees (DTC) as increasingly they are seen as standard treatment. DTCs are regulated by in Sweden since 1996. There is minimum one DTC in each of the 21 regional counties in charge of healthcare delivery in Sweden. In Stockholm capital region with its 2 million inhabitants the DTC has developed a “Wise List” as a comprehensive concept for selecting, communicating and achieving adherence to recommendations across outpatient clinics and hospitals. The basis for the “Wise List” recommendations are generic drugs instead of new and unproven drugs. In 2009 the adherence to recommendations was 87% in primary care and with no proven difference in quality of care despite choosing cost-effective generic products like simvastatin instead of other statins and generic ACE-inhibitors instead of much more expensive angiotensin receptor blockers. Still the use of generics can increase by including them on “Wise Lists” that are marketed to prescribers and the public as carried out in Stockholm during the past 10 years.



References

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