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Hot
News
Bites

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USFDA Approvals

RATIONALE OF ACECLOFENAC

in management of pyrexia in paediatric practice

3D PRINTING IN PHARMACEUTICALS

Branded vs generic medicine

Drug and Cosmetic Act Series -1

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A portrait of Sudarshan Jain, a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing glasses, a white shirt, a red patterned tie, and a dark pinstriped suit jacket. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

Sudarshan Jain

Secretary-General IPA

Why choose the branded medicine rather than the generic medicine ?

Though we all know generic medicines are cheaper than their original counterparts, many still opt for the original brand when the pharmacist offers them the generic version. Perhaps, they do it because they know that the generic might not be manufactured to the same standards as the original. They are not alone. The fact that generic drugs are less expensive often makes consumers wonder whether they are buying an inferior or less effective product.

That is why it is still common to see millions of consumers continue to ask their doctors or pharmacists for brand drugs for everything from depression to blood thinners or diabetes drugs. Just as people opt for Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy S series instead of no-name Chinese brands like Ambrane, in the case of drugs too, people choose to buy branded medicines and feel safe in doing so. Such is the power of branded drugs.

Branded Medicines vs. Generic Medicines

Drugs or medicines are any substance either biological or chemical and when

consumed affects the physiological function of the body. It is used in the treatment, cure, mitigation, diagnosis and prevention of diseases. These drugs classified as Over the Counter (OTC) drugs or prescription drugs are available as Branded/Proprietary drugs or Generic drugs.

Branded Medicines - The original product that has been developed by a pharmaceutical company is called branded medicine. When a new medicine is developed by a pharmaceutical company, its product must undergo and pass rigorous tests and evaluations to ensure that it is both effective in curing the condition it claims to treat and also safe for human use.

Generic Medicine - Companies take out exclusive rights called patents on each new drug they discover. If a company has a patent on a drug, only that company can market it under their brand name once it's been granted a license. It is only on the expiry of the patent, can other manufacturers market generic versions. Generic drugs are not protected by a patent.



Dr Sanjay Agrawal

Dr Agrawal founded PHARMA CONSULTANTS and INVENTOR to fulfill his passion, capabilities and desire to assist pharmaceutical companies around the globe. He has actively worked in pharmaceutical and related industries for more than 28 years and started this firm in 2005. He is **Editor-in-Chief** of renowned IJM Today and honorable member of the editorial board of **The Antiseptic**.



Generic drugs must meet the entire same requirement of their branded counterparts. They must have the same active pharmaceutical ingredients, possess the same action and dissolving rate as the proprietary counterpart, have the same dosage form (oral, topical, intravenous etc.), have the same strength and purity, have the same conditions of use and be manufactured according to strict standards set by the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) Good Manufacturing Practices for the proprietary counterparts.

Benefits of brand name medicines

Brand name medicines: They are created by the pharmaceutical

company that made the medicine. These are the actual names under which a particular drug is sold, such as AlkaFizz.

Non-proprietary generic name

drugs: A generic drug is the one known by the name of its chemical component, for example, Paracetamol is a generic drug available under brand names like Calpol or Crocin. It is the name of the active ingredient in the medicine e.g., antihistamine, that is biologically active and that has a particular effect on the structure or function of the body. Antihistamine is used in the treatment of allergies.

- You'd think that people would

use a generic name more often for common drugs, and a brand name for medications used more rarely. However, whether generic or brand, studies show that names most frequently used were the ones that were shorter, easier to remember and to pronounce. Data research says that nurses are much more likely to use the brand name.

- Every pharmacy does not have an experienced pharmacist who knows what drug is for what whereas brand name is familiar for them.
- And, in the case of emergency, every patient cannot remember the drug name but easier to recollect the brand name.
- Sometimes, generic prescriptions are difficult to write for a genuine doctor.
- When we address a drug by its brand name, research has suggested that the physician is more likely to use the brand name drug, even though it's functionally the same as the generic. The names that doctors most easily remember are the brand names. It is for practical reasons that many doctors prescribe the brand name as they are typically

shorter, quickly written, more familiar and easier to remember too. Even during conversations, a lot of doctors are seen using the brand name.

Why do doctors prescribe a brand-name drug when a generic is available?

On assessing the frequency of brand-name drug prescription, it is found that many health care providers often prescribe brand-name drugs over the generic equivalents. The reason is, physicians express concern that generic medications are less effective or cause more severe side effects.

- The ACP (American College of Physicians) admits there are some situations where a brand-name drug may be more clinically appropriate than its generic alternative or cases where prescribing an alternative is not possible.
- According to research reports published in the Annals of Pharmacotherapy, generics are still not trusted by many doctors. It says that over 50 percent of the doctors do hold negative perceptions about the quality of generic medications.
- There are also a small number of medications where even a small

difference in the absorption can have a serious impact on the patient. For example, medications with narrow therapeutic index should thus be prescribed by brand names. For example, Lithium, theophylline and some antiepileptics. In anti-seizure medications, generics have met some especially stiff resistance. Indeed, the American Academy of Neurology has on record opposed the generic substitution of anticonvulsant drugs and has insisted that they cannot be prescribed without the attending physician's approval.

- In the case of levothyroxine, which is used to treat thyroid disease and is available as a generic and under such brand names as Synthroid – Based on reports, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has acknowledged some issues with the generic's potency, that it may not exactly match the brand name in the amount of the active ingredient it contains or in the way it is absorbed and distributed in the body.

Disadvantages of generic drugs over proprietary counterparts

- **Contamination:** Generic drugs are sometimes produced in factories with cheap labor, improper storage conditions and with the wrong GMP

(Good Manufacturing Practices).

- **Consumer confusion:** Patients may get confused on seeing a drug having different name and appearance but with medicinal benefits as the same. Thus to prevent a particular drug from being mistaken for another during prescribing and dispensing, both the generic names and proprietary names must be unique.
- **Reactions:** Generic drugs must meet strict guidelines and thus have the same amount of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients delivered to the body at the same times as the branded product. Although the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient is same for both generic and branded drugs, the Inactive Pharmaceutical Ingredient in a generic drug is always different from the Inactive Pharmaceutical Ingredient in branded drugs and can affect the rate of absorption. Though these inactive ingredients are not harmful and they don't affect the body, but sometimes these ingredients can cause severe allergic reactions in a few people. For example, sodium metabisulphites, usually used as a preservative in many products has been seen to cause asthmatic allergic reactions.

That is the reason why branded drugs are more preferred to generic ones.

- **Quality Issues:** Quality and efficacy are not assured with generics. It must be remembered that brand assurance and quality control matter in each and every industry, be it consumer electronics or drugs or even surgical equipment or radio diagnostic equipment. Studies say that many generic drug preparations fail to comply with the minimum permissible standards in tests conducted.

In theory, there shouldn't be any difference between branded and generic drug because both are chemically the same. Given the lax regulatory oversight and

enforcement, substandard drugs with little or no efficacy are often flooded in the market endangering patient health.

Advantages of proprietary drugs over generic drugs

They are patent drugs which mean that they are the latest drug in their class and may have newly discovered ingredient and benefits. A patent is filed by a pharmaceutical company when it discovers a new drug. A patent is a technical description of what the drug is and what it is used for. Because pharmaceutical companies invest considerable amounts of money to develop a new medicine, they are given the sole right to manufacture and distribute the medicine for a period of time. Thus, they are patented drugs

which mean that a drug can be manufactured and sold by the innovator company. No one else can produce a drug that is the same as the patented drug and the medicine belongs exclusively to the original company. It is for this reason that branded medicines are the most well known and most trusted type of that particular medicine. They have a well-labeled container, are accurate and in compliance with quality standards. Thus, branded medicines are most sought after by consumers all over the world due to the many advantages they offer when compared to their counterparts, the generic medicines.

~Dr Sanjay Agrawal



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