

Prescribing of Branded Generic Medicines

Statement

The Cumbria Area Prescribing Committee does not support the use of branded generics. It supports the generic prescribing of drugs, except where there are possible risks of variation of bioavailability, principally for modified release preparations.

A generic is a pharmaceutical product for which a marketing authorisation has been granted and is the generic bioequivalent of an original patented reference product for which the patent has expired and is labelled with an approved name.

Some generic medicines have been given a brand name by the manufacturer for marketing reasons; these products are referred to as 'branded generics'. The prices of branded generics may be attractive as they may be lower than the list price for equivalent generics (the Drug Tariff cost), especially when the price of generics may not be reduced in the short term when they initially come 'off patent'. However, these savings may be unsustainable by the manufacturer and in the long term may not necessarily be cheaper, or in the best interests of the NHS overall, than prescribing a generic product with a more expensive reimbursement price. This is due, among other things, to the larger discount generally offered to dispensers on the average generic medicine.

The policy of the Area Prescribing Committee is that generic prescribing should be preferred, except for formulations where there is a risk of differences in bioavailability, often with modified release preparations¹. Branded generics are often poorly indexed in the BNF, and this may lead to misunderstanding of the active ingredients by prescribers.

Combined oral contraceptives are considered to be an exception. As these products contain multiple ingredients, there is not an established way of describing them generically, and there can be variation in description of content on packaging or within prescribing literature of these preparations, there is risk in asking for them to be prescribed generically. Therefore it is advised that these are prescribed by brand name.

References

¹ Which medicines should be considered for brand name prescribing in primary care. UKMI, July 2103. Available at: <http://www.medicinesresources.nhs.uk/GetDocument.aspx?pagelId=509017>