

## Policy Brief #28

### Study of the Factors Influencing Use of Generic Drugs

This policy brief describe the findings of the study aimed at investigation of determinants of generic drug use by physicians, people and pharmacists. The main goals of this study were aimed at assessment of legislation, related to promotion of generics, their volume and prices at the drug market of the KR. The study focused on familiarization with opinion of 3 target groups:

- the role of physicians in use of generics, and their practice in prescribing generic drugs;
- patients awareness and adherence to take generic drugs;
- the role of pharmacists in use of generics by population and their substitution practice of generic products.

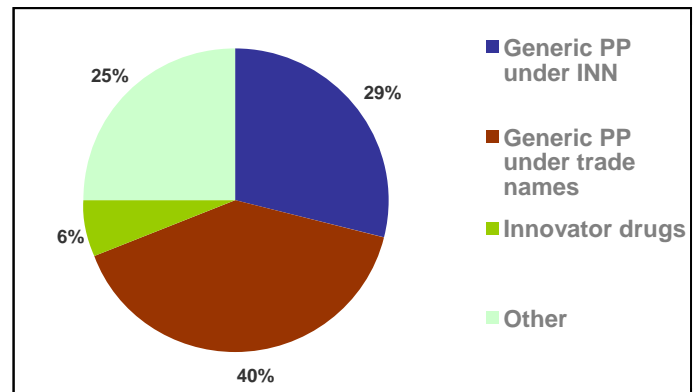
#### Key Findings

The study findings indicate that the major part of the drug market in the Kyrgyz Republic (93%) falls on generics. There are very few innovator drugs at the KR market, only 2% are formally registered and about 6% is imported to the country from the total volume of imported drugs, which is in 3 times more than officially registered, since, besides the officially registered drugs from the State Drug Register, there is an additional list of drugs, which can be imported. Besides, it is also possible that these drugs were smuggled into the country.

#### A Structure of the Generic Drugs Market

Analysis of imported drugs for 2008 indicates that drugs have been mainly imported from CIS, Russia, and non CIS states. Generics has a large market share - 69%: a market for generic drugs is well developed and has 40% share, and remaining 29% are drugs with international non-proprietary names (INN). Innovator drugs are available only in Bishkek. Innovator drugs in all observed cases were always more expensive than generics. Branded generic drugs were always more expensive than INN.

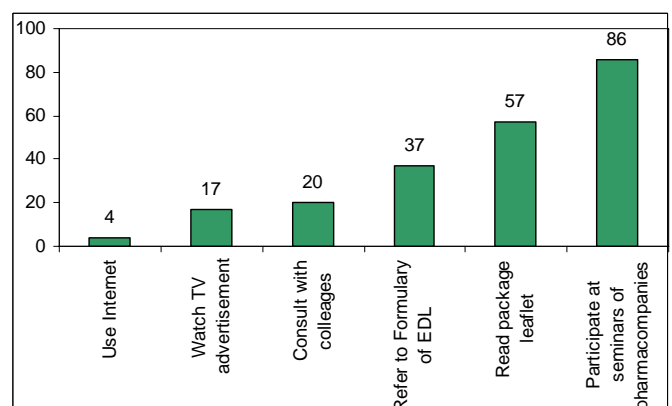
Volumes of Imported Drugs Groups in 2008, %



#### Physicians Interviews' Results

Examination of existing information sources showed that the majority of doctors (86%) receive information about drugs that they prescribe in workshops and presentations organized by pharmaceutical companies, 57% of physicians use instructions for medical drug use, 37% of doctors indicated that they used Drug Formulary as a source of information, 20% of doctors said that they asked their colleges to give them a piece of advice, 17% of physicians were watching TV advertisements, and 4% used internet to get information about drugs.

Sources used by physicians to get information about drugs (%)



## Drug Information Sources

In general interviews with doctors proved that

- level of doctors' awareness on INN generics, branded generics and innovator drugs is very low, the doctors receive information on drugs mainly from manufacturers of pharmaceutical products;
- lack of objective information from regulating bodies and aggressive marketing of pharmaceutical companies has formed a stereotype that branded names are safer and more effective than INN generics;
- doctors in their drug prescription practice rely on their practical experience, and in most of the cases (hypertension, stomach ulcer) they prefer to prescribe more expensive branded generics and innovator drugs), which is also proved by the conducted screening of patients files on outpatient level on the selected diseases;
- doctors reported that they often prescribe branded generics under patients' pressure;
- physicians are poorly informed about variety of drugs in pharmacies and drug prices; and they have very rare contacts with pharmacists.

## Results of Patients' Interviews

Family physicians are the most significant source of drug information for patients. 84,8% of respondents (patients) said that more often they get information about drugs for their treatment from their family doctors. 10,2% seek advice from pharmacists, and individual respondents reported different sources of information. However, doctors' opinion provide higher influence on choice of drugs: 88,9% of respondents said that they would rely only on their doctor recommendations, when they bought drugs.

In general the interviews with patients proved that:

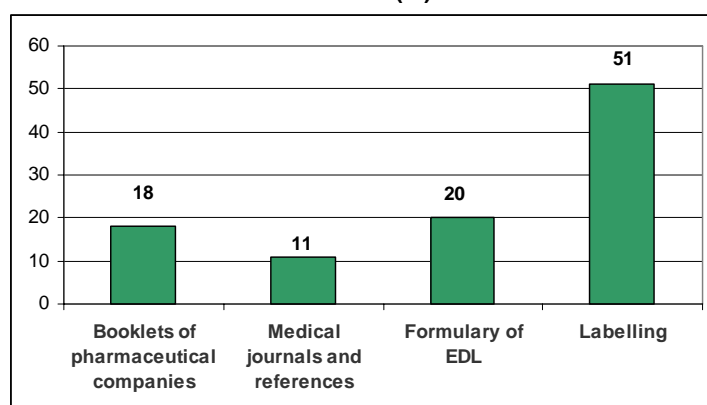
- patients are poorly and superficially informed about main characteristics of the drugs that they use, patients need to get this information from a doctor, however doctors do not always inform them due to lack of time and knowledge, and patients are not eager to get the information about their drugs;
- not all patients know that there are cheaper INN drugs and more expensive branded generics, which have the same effect, and they tend to think that more expensive drugs are more effective;
- doctors' recommendations are very important for patients, when they buy drugs, and the most important factor that guide them is effectiveness and quality of the drug, and more than half of respondents are ready to buy more expensive drugs;

- 32% of surveyed patients offered by pharmacists to replace the drugs they were looking for another one – including more than a half of patients (57,4%) were offered to substitute drugs prescribed by their doctor due to their unavailability; about 28% of patients were offered to buy a more expensive drug than the drug prescribed by their doctor, and only 8% of patients were offered a cheaper drug. These numbers show that pharmacists do not understand the principle of generic substitution, or when a doctor prescribe INN and a pharmacist should offer the cheapest available generics;
- branded names dominate among those drugs that patients take or used to take, the highest share of innovator drugs was among patients with stomach ulcer (17%).

## Results of Interviews with Pharmacists

Manufacturer's instruction on drug use, inserted into a drug package is a main source of drug information for more than a half of interviewed pharmacists (51%). This is quite logical, since if a pharmacist has a drug for sale and doesn't know its pharmacological property, he/she can always read the instruction inserted into a drug package.

**The Most Popular Sources of Drugs Information among Pharmacists (%)**



Interviewing pharmacists has generally shown that:

- drug use instructions, inserted into a drug package is the main source of information for pharmacists. The role of pharmaceutical companies in communicating drug information is less aggressive for pharmacists than for doctors;
- due to the lack of knowledge and information, pharmacists have developed an opinion that branded generics (which were more expensive in the surveyed cases) are more effective than INN drugs on a few parameters;
- pharmacists do not understand the principle of generic substitution: they offer a substitution of a drug prescribed

by a doctor, only in case of its unavailability, but this does not mean that they offer cheaper INN;

- generic substitution is not properly performed also due to the fact that pharmacists cannot always influence on patients opinion, the major part of patients prefer to buy only those drugs, which have been prescribed by their doctors;

- about 25% of patients go directly to a pharmacy without recommendations of a doctor, and often buy the drugs, recommended by a pharmacist.

### **Recommendations:**

- To develop the national criteria for drugs selection and have them approved. One of the criteria should include a requirement to include drugs with proved effectiveness into the Drug List;
- In order to ensure high drug quality it is necessary to change the requirements to registration dossiers and to oblige applicants to submit main documents that certify drug quality – GMP Certificate and information on registration of the drug, for example in EU countries and Ukraine;
- In order to perform a good assessment of information related to bioequivalence of registered generics, professionals from MOH Drugs & Medical Equipment Department (MOH D&MED) have to be properly trained at international training activities;
- For ensuring high quality and availability of the used drugs, one should envisage introduction of mechanisms, which promote registration and re-registration of only those drugs that have evidence of their quality, from the Essential Drug List and not sufficiently presented at the market. This mechanism may imply free registration of very important essential drugs, of the proved quality under the condition that an applicant provides registration dossiers and drug(s) samples;

- It is necessary to strengthen activities to prevent import of non-registered drugs through revision and cancellation of importable drugs without registration, and by enhancing pharmacovigilance activities in pharmacies;
- To continue the policy of generics introduction through training, informing doctors, pharmacists, and population; to develop better educational programs for promoting generics concept, including their cost efficiency aspects, quality and evidence based efficiency;
- To increase accessibility of health professionals to reliable drug information sources by strengthening the role of Information Department of MOH D&MED in providing objective information;
- It is necessary to assess the situation with drugs promotion in Kyrgyzstan in order to provide further training for health professionals to develop the skills of critical assessment of drugs information provided by pharmaceutical companies, methods of responding to aggressive marketing and communication skills to be able to communicate with medical representatives of pharmaceutical companies;
- MOH and other health agencies have to regulate and limit activities of pharmaceutical companies that have been actively promoting their drugs among doctors;
- To introduce incentives for pharmacists or pharmacies that have been contracted under the Additional Drug Benefit Package, which motivate them to sell INN drugs with mandatory monitoring of this process through regular MHIF inspections.

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