

Duloxetine holds price as others drop theirs

Duloxetine data shows that the average UK generic price of the 60mg strength in May – two months after launch – was £24.99 (US\$39.61) for a pack of 28 gastro-resistant capsules, compared with £27.72 for Eli Lilly’s Cymbalta equivalent (see Figure 1).

The antidepressant has remained in category C of the Drug Tariff, which is for products that “are not readily available as a generic”, and means that pharmacists are reimbursed at the brand price for dispensing the generic. As a result, pharmacists’ average dispensing margin was the same as the average generic discount to the brand of just 10%, according to WaveData. Even by shopping around, the best trade price available to independent community pharmacists was £22.73, lifting the discount and dispensing margin to only 18%.

Average and lowest trade prices have actually increased for duloxetine since generic launch, presumably reflecting a misjudgement by the players of the likely competition. When duloxetine 60mg was launched, its average trade price was £23.47, offering a 15% discount to the brand, while the lowest price available was £23.01 or 17%.

Another category C drug, sevelamer carbonate, was launched a month or so earlier on 10 February (see Figure 2). Used to control phosphorus levels in adults undergoing kidney dialysis, the generic equivalent to Sanofi’s Renvela was offering a discount – and pharmacy dispensing margin – of just under 25% two months after launch. This was still a shallow price decline compared with that for blockbuster generics, but nevertheless much steeper than for duloxetine.

Available only as 180-tablet packs of the 800mg strength, sevelamer had an average trade price of £127.51 in April, compared with a brand and Drug Tariff price of £167.04. Shopping around would have reduced the trade price to £104.99, representing a generic discount and dispensing margin of 37%.

Sevelamer’s price decline in the first two months after launch was mirrored by that of aripiprazole, introduced on 27 January. By March, the generic equivalent to Otsuka’s Abilify antipsychotic had also declined in price by about a quarter (see Figures 3 and 4). Unlike sevelamer and duloxetine, however, aripiprazole is now in category A of the Drug Tariff as it is a drug that is “readily available”. Its pharmacy reimbursement price is based on the weighted list prices of Actavis, Teva and the wholesalers AAH and Alliance Healthcare.

Nevertheless, in March, when it was still in category C, pharmacists were being reimbursed at the brand’s trade price. The average trade price of 28-tablet packs of aripiprazole 10mg had declined to £71.77, or 25% below the brand price of £96.04. Similarly, the average price of the 30mg strength was £143.05, or 26% below the brand at £192.08.

Last month, the Drug Tariff price of the 10mg strength had dropped to £90.71, but the average trade price had reached £56.44, representing a 38% dispensing margin for pharmacists, and a 41% discount to the brand. Similarly, the comparable figures for the 30mg strength were 37% and 40%. Even taking the lowest trade prices for the two strengths, however, the price discounts to the brand after four months on the market were both only 66%, compared with 90% or more for a faster-moving generic like another recent market entrant, celecoxib (*Generics bulletin*, 22 May 2015, page 25).

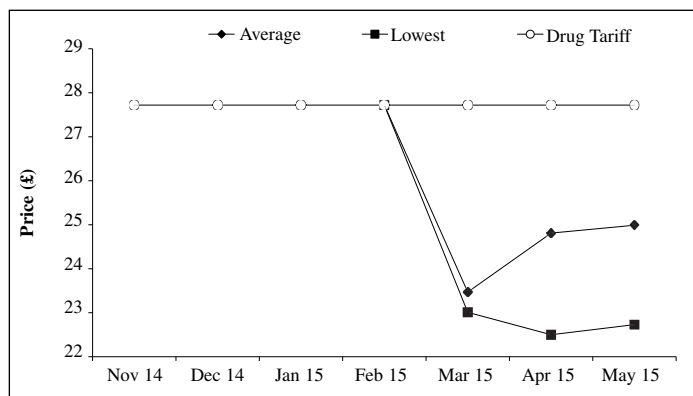


Figure 1: Lowest and average trade, and Drug Tariff prices for 28-capsule packs of duloxetine 60mg since generic launch (Source – WaveData)

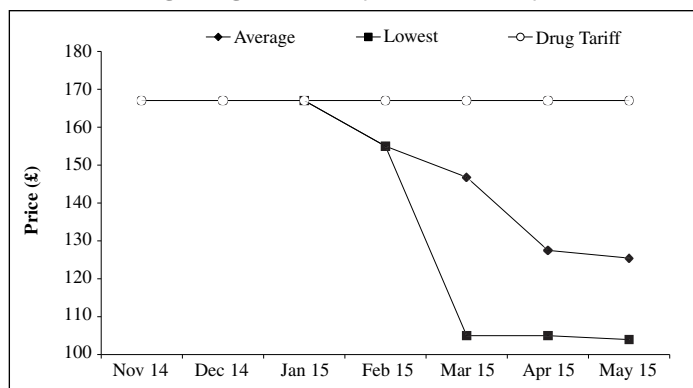


Figure 2: Lowest and average trade, and Drug Tariff prices for 180-tablet packs of sevelamer carbonate 800mg since generic launch (Source – WaveData)

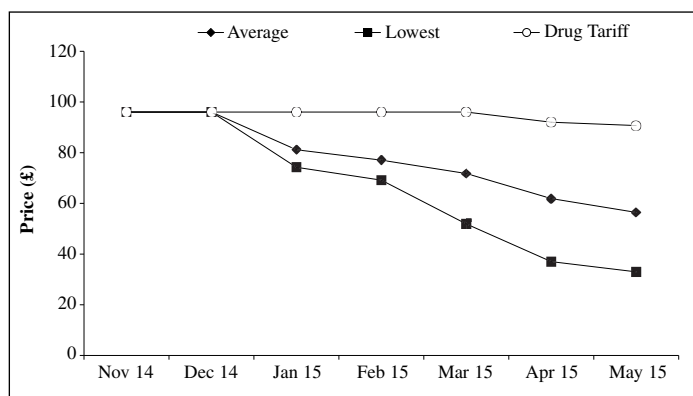


Figure 3: Lowest and average trade, and Drug Tariff prices for 28-tablet packs of aripiprazole 10mg since generic launch (Source – WaveData)

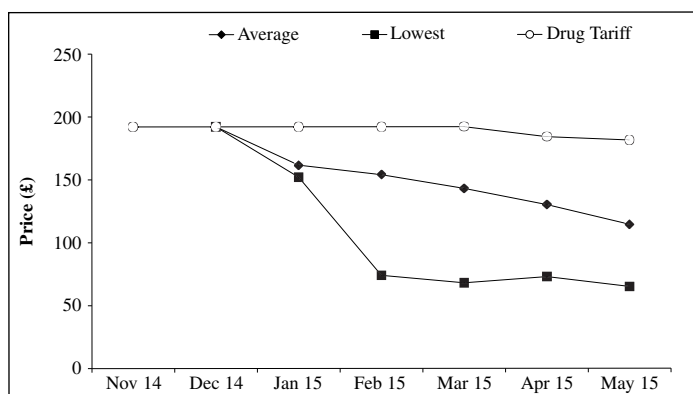


Figure 4: Lowest and average trade, and Drug Tariff prices for 28-tablet packs of aripiprazole 30mg since generic launch (Source – WaveData)

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