

Prices change, but discounts remain

Two strengths of carvedilol showed the biggest price rises in the UK market over the past six months; while two gabapentin presentations were the largest price fallers during the March-August period. The average monthly price for one of the antihypertensives – 28-tablet packs of carvedilol 3.125mg – almost doubled in the half-year period. This was the exact opposite, however, of the price movement for one of the two epilepsy treatments – 100-capsule packs of gabapentin 300mg – which has nearly halved in price since the spring.

No other products in WaveData's UK basket of more than 300 generics experienced bigger price rises or falls in the period, although it could be argued that any price doubling or halving within just six months was symptomatic of a volatile market. And yet, despite their price changes, both products offered almost exactly the same discounts to their respective brands in August.

Seven or eight companies were active in the gabapentin market, according to their own or wholesaler's price offers; while another seven offered the two carvedilol strengths. There was no real change in the number of price offers made each month to independent pharmacists and dispensing doctors in the six-month period, which was 55-60 on average for the two carvedilol products and 75-80 on average for the two gabapentin presentations.

Back in March 2008, 28-tablet packs of carvedilol 3.125mg and 6.25mg were £0.45 (US\$0.79) and £0.55, respectively, which was the lowest they had ever been since generic launch in April 2004 (see Figure 1). They offered independent pharmacists and dispensing doctors 94% discounts to the trade prices of Roche's Eucardic brand.

The average price for 28-tablet packs of carvedilol 3.125mg, however, reached £0.88 in August, 96% more than it had been in March (see Figure 2). Similarly, the average price of the 6.25mg strength rose to £0.97, a 76% increase over the previous six months. Nevertheless, despite the average price uplifts, both presentations still offered 88% discounts to the brand price.

Average prices in March, meanwhile, for 100-capsule packs of gabapentin 100mg and 300mg were £7.68 and £13.23, which was well above the lowest-ever average prices of £3.96 and £4.82 recorded in June 2006 (see Figure 3), some time after generic launch. Although under £4 for the 100mg strength was only an 83% discount on Pfizer's Neurontin, the brand discount was over 90% for the higher strength.

Since those low points more than two years ago, the two gabapentin prices had bounced up to more than £10 and nearly £20. However, they started coming down again at the beginning of this year, and by March the brand discounts had been restored to 66% and 75%.

Further price falls over the next six months ensured that the average price of the 100mg strength had fallen by 40% to £4.58 in August, and that of the 300mg strength by 46% to £7.15 (see Figure 4). These falls restored the average price discounts to the brand, reaching 87% discounts for both presentations.

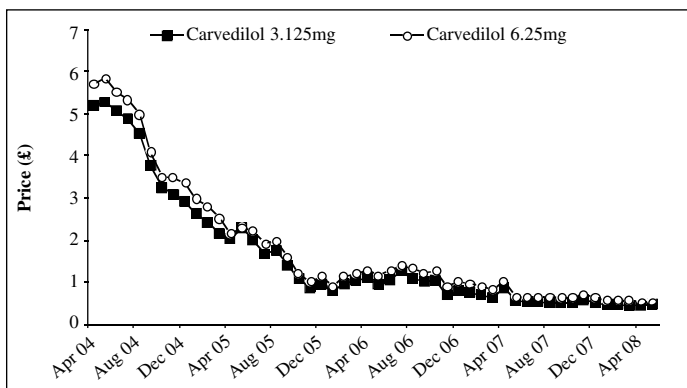


Figure 1: Average monthly prices of 28-tablet packs of carvedilol 3.125mg and 6.25mg since patent expiry in April 2004 (Source – WaveData)

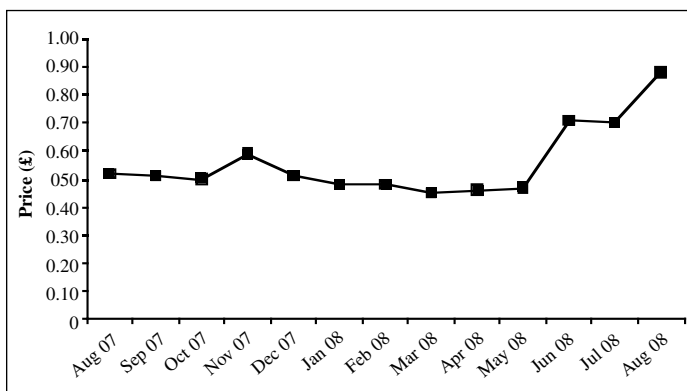


Figure 2: Average monthly prices for 28-tablet packs of carvedilol 3.125mg over the past 12 months (Source – WaveData)

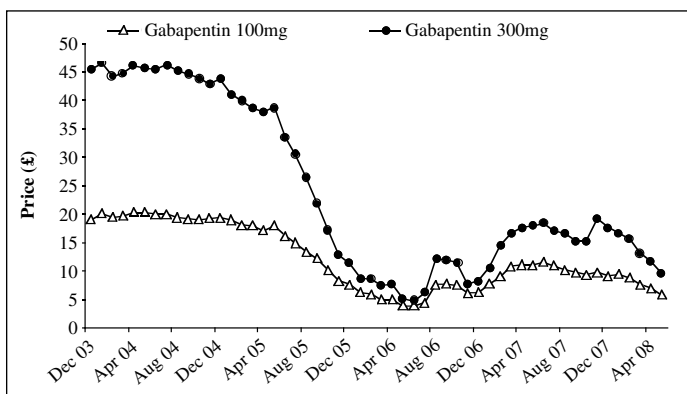


Figure 3: Average monthly prices of 100-capsule packs of gabapentin 100mg and 300mg since December 2003, when generics first appeared (Source – WaveData)

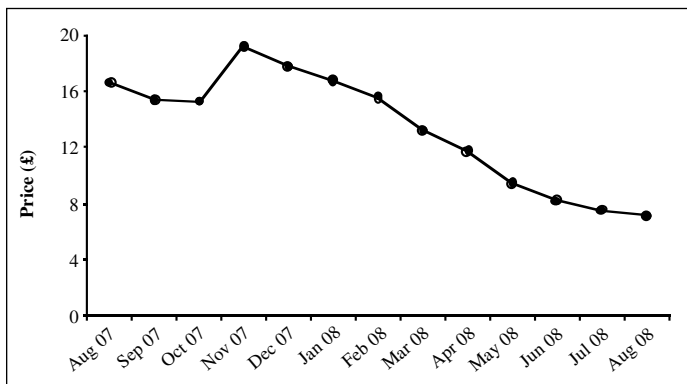


Figure 4: Average monthly prices for 100-capsule packs of gabapentin 300mg over the past 12 months (Source – WaveData)

PRICE WATCH UK highlights generics price changes in the UK market and appears exclusively in every issue of *Generics bulletin*, courtesy of WaveData. WaveData collects prices from across the UK for generics, brands and parallel imports. These prices are gathered from offers made to independent retail pharmacists and dispensing doctors by wholesalers, suppliers and product manufacturers. WaveData collates this data and publishes the results, giving customers fast, accurate, real-time access to current market prices and long-term trends. Current prices are published as wavedata.net; while the Pharma TouchStone service includes prices from recent months. WaveData's BPPI service tracks prices back as far as 2000.

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