

### **Surge in drug price attributed to depreciation of rupee**

ISLAMABAD: Prices of entire range of drugs have been increased following rupee depreciation, a survey conducted by Business Recorder revealed here on Friday.

According to drug dealers at drug wholesales market, Pakistani pharmaceutical industry over the year kept on demanding the government to increase the drug prices as per inflation and Pakistani rupee depreciation against global currencies, especially against dollar, as major portion of the raw material used in manufacturing various drugs is being imported.

Following regular depreciation of Pakistani currency, the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) recently allowed pharmaceutical companies to increase the medicine prices up to 15 percent but in market the drug rates have been hiked from 15 percent to 300 percent.

The DRAP, working under the Ministry of National Health Services, had allowed pharmaceutical companies in January 2019 to increase the prices of medicines from 9 to 15 percent. However, the companies taking the benefit of weak price checking mechanism have increased the prices of several products up to 100 percent.

The survey observed price of Triforge tablet used for treating heart diseases has been increased from Rs 186 per pack to Rs 486 per pack, tablet Proviron 25mg price has been increased from Rs 247 per pack to Rs 586 per pack, tablet Concor 2.5 mg from Rs 62.35 per pack to Rs 125.35 per pack, Panadol from Rs 247 per 100 tablets pack to Rs 264 per 100 tablets pack and price of Erythrocin per 100 tablets pack has been increased from Rs 550 to Rs 921 per 100 tabs pack. Similarly, tablet Augmentin 625mg price went up from Rs 132 per pack to Rs 164 per pack, Hitop 50 mg tablet from Rs 745 per pack to Rs 862 per pack, Serc 16 mg tablet from Rs 509 per pack to Rs 585 per pack, Methycobal tab from 1,485 per pack to Rs 1,683 per pack, Ganotan OD 150 mg tab from 336 per pack to Rs 499 per pack, CAC tab from Rs 133 per 10 tab pack to Rs 153 per 10 tab pack, Sita-met tab 50/500 mg Rs 343 per pack to Rs 384 per pack, Ostech tab from Rs 500 per pack to Rs 600 per pack and Lumigan eye drop from Rs 1,050 per bottle to Rs 1,220 per bottle.

“Prices of majority of the medicines have suddenly been shot up, which is beyond any reason, as officially, only 9-15 percent increase in prices was notified,” Mushtaq Awan, a drug dealer said.

Mushtaq added that prices of medicines including those for blood pressure, diabetes, stomach and cardiac problems have been increased up to 100 percent.

Director Pricing DRAP Amanullah said that only 4 cases of illegal increase of price have been detected by the DRAP and legal proceedings against the companies have been initiated. He said that despite the fact that sale of drugs is a provincial subject, drug inspectors have been directed to monitor the prices.

He said that the companies had not increased the prices of diabetes medicines voluntarily, while now they have increased the prices according to the official order. He said that the companies have

provision of voluntarily reducing the prices of medicines.

The director pricing also said that the price of antiseptic products was increased as the company was in the court with the claim that it did not fall in the category of drugs. He added that around 70,000 medicines are registered with the DRAP and it has a system of controlling the prices.

Chairman PPMA Zahid Saeed said that in past one year around 125 new medicines related to cancer, heart diseases and other serious diseases have been introduced worldwide but Pakistanis can't take the advantage of these drugs as there is no pricing for new drugs.

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