Press Release

The Indian Medical Association calls for stronger laws to eliminate the circulation of spurious and substandard medicines in the country

Writes to its 3 lakh members asking them to extend support towards the Prime Ministers push for Generic Drugs

New Delhi, 21st April, 2017: The Indian Medical Association, the oldest and largest representative organisation of doctors of modern scientific medicine is committed to helping the government in making low price medicines available to the masses. It welcomed Prime Minister Narender Modi’s push for generic drugs at a press conference held at the IMA headquarters today.

IMA feels that to make this a reality, there is a need to address key issues such as increased penetration of spurious and substandard medicines in our country, unauthorized dispensing of generics by chemists as well as lack of dedicated fair price medical shops by the government.

IMA is for promotion of drugs in the National List of Essential Medicines NLEM, which are price capped and cheaper. Its policy is to write NLEM and non-NLEM drugs with consent of the patient, promote Jan Aushadhi drugs and take strict action against drug stores that do not keep NLEM drugs.

Speaking about the subject, Padma Shri Awardee Dr KK Aggarwal, National President IMA, President of HCFI, & Dr R.N. Tandon, Honorary Secretary General IMA said, “For doctors to prescribe generic drugs, it is crucial that the laws regarding drug testing and quality assurance are strengthened. IMA is for writing the generic name of the drug alone, and also recognizes the need to mention the name of the company of whose generic the patient is going to buy. The same should also be freely available. IMA also believes that CGHS, PSUs and IRDA should mandate reimbursement of only NLEM drugs unless reasoned out. The recent inclusion of stents under the NLEM has reduced prices. All other devices and disposables should also be brought under NLEM”.

Very often, generic prescribing is misconceived as writing a drug’s generic name or non-proprietary name. All Generic drugs have a brand name as well as a non- proprietary name but all drugs having a non- proprietary name (generic name) may not be generic drugs. The patent for Paracetamol expired in 2007 after which numerous generic versions have been developed and sold under various
“brand names”. If one were to prescribe it only by the name “Paracetamol” (generic name), it is up to the pharmacist to select and dispense a particular brand, which may either be the costliest brand or it could be the cheapest brand at somewhere in between (Med Guide India, 2013).

A simpler and better alternative for cost reduction would be to prescribe the cheapest “brand” of Paracetamol or a NLEM drug. The price difference of “branded” and branded-generic equivalents of commonly used medicines manufactured by the same pharmaceutical company in India is substantial considered. For instance if retailer margin for branded medicines was in the range of 25-30%, that their branded-generics version was in the range of 201-1016%.

IMA feels that there is a need to bring the department responsible for generic drug quality control under the Ministry of Health rather than Ministry of Chemical and Petroleum affairs. Quality assurance laboratories should be urgently installed in every state.

A few points:
1. No one will be able to get Jan Aushadhi drugs if the words ‘Jan Aushadhi’ are not written on the prescription. Jan Aushadhi therefore is also a brand
2. All NLEM drugs should be available under one window pharmacy.
3. Not keeping NLEM drugs should be considered a crime.
4. The answer is to ‘Write generic name of the drug, Choose from NLEM, Write Jan Aushadhi or a standard company name’.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2,60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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