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# Genericisation evokes fierce debate at third edition of Vantage Point

By Lakshmipriya Nair on May 12, 2017



*Panelists divided on the impact of the push for generics, many laud the intent but remain sceptical of consequences*

A fiery debate on **'Genericisation: Panacea or Pandora's Box?'** ensued at the third edition of Vantage Point, *Express Pharma's* platform to discuss and deliberate on Indian pharma sector's most pressing and controversial topics. Partnered by Wellness Forever, the event was held at Sofitel in Mumbai. An eminent panel deliberated on the implications and possibilities of the Centre's push towards genericisation of pharma brands, in a very interesting and insightful session, moderated by Dr Milind Antani, Head, Pharma and Life Sciences, Nishith Desai Associates.

The panel comprised Dr Amar Jesani, Editor, IJME; Dr Jayesh Lele, National Secretary – IMA Board of India; Milind Mangle, Internationally Certified Coach and Consultant, Angle Consultancy & Services; Vajjanath Eknath Jagushte, Treasurer, Chairman of Legal Affairs Committee – AIOCD & MSCDA and Treasurer of MSCDA; Priti Mohile, MediaMedic Communications; Dr KS Sharma, PG Committee Member, Medical Council of India MCI and Director Academic Tata Hospital; Daara Patel, Secretary General, IDMA; and Dr Suleiman Merchant, Dean, Lokmanya Tilak Municipal General Hospital and Medical College.

discussed points and look at the issue in a more detailed manner. He also threw light on many legal aspects of the issue and explained the various grey areas to give more clarity on the same. Dr Antani, in the course of his moderation, quipped that the Indian lifesciences industry is facing a challenge between choosing what is ethical and what is legal.



*Audience raise questions to the panelists to get more insights*

Industry representatives were openly critical of genericisation. They viewed the move with disfavour and highlighted various pitfalls which would arise if genericisation became the law. Do all generic medicines give the same results as their branded counterparts? Are enough generic medicines available in market? While focusing on price, how do we not lose sight of quality? These were some of the questions posed by experts and veterans during the debate.

At the same time, there were panelists like Dr Jesani who was totally in favour of prescribing generics. He outlined the various advantages in terms of access and affordability of medicines. He said that if there was political will and collaboration between stakeholders, then genericisation could indeed be a panacea and create significant positive impact for patients. At the same time he admitted that there is a need to have better monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure effective implementation of the government's push towards generics.

Opining that genericisation is a populist move, Dr Lele questioned the preparedness of the government to implement it effectively. He said that quality can be a concern in such a scenario as the industry and medical fraternity is ill-equipped to deal with genericisation. He lauded the intent of the government but expressed reservations about effective implementation of the move.

Mangle pointed out that this is a very multi-faceted issue and would have wide-reaching implications. He explained the rationale of the government behind pushing generics and stated that though the intention was to introduce a panacea to many problems faced by healthcare industry today, inadvertently opened a Pandora's Box. He said that our public and other stakeholders are still uninformed about various issues and hence not ready for a step like genericisation. He pointed out the various complexities arising from the move and said that lack of accountability is one of the major concerns in this situation.

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@ExpPharma Thanks to Express Pharma Team & Viveka for organising such a stimulating discussion on Government's dictate to prescribe generics

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*An enrapt audience listening to the debate on generic medicines versus branded medicines*

Mohile was in favour of genericisation but she too had doubts about the step being successful in achieving its objective. As a communication specialist, she threw light on how marketing and PR would change in times of genericisation and its effect on patients. She also said that information about quality will become paramount in future.

Jagusthe expressed concerns about ensuring quality and said that it is a premature move. He pointed out that there is no standardisation in India as far as quality is concerned. He opined that unless quality is assured through proper regulations and infrastructure, enforcing prescription of only generics is not a good decision. He lauded *Jan Aushadhi* as a good initiative to make medicines available but recommended strengthening it with better economic policies to make it sustainable and extend its reach.

Dr Sharma gave instances of how genericisation can fail in implementation and raised concerns about quality, accountability and efficacy. He said that the government's intention to nullify the nexus between the medical fraternity and pharma companies might not really succeed as the wrongdoers might find ways to circumvent the move and continue with the malpractices. He also pointed out to various grey areas which may prevent the move from being a beneficial one, for instance, crosspathy practitioners do not have to adhere to these guidelines.

Patel was emphatic that 'generics only' is a decision which will not serve any objective. He stated that other measures to reduce prices might be more effectual and claimed that the industry would support the government if they come up with better strategies to serve the masses. He recommended slashing taxes of essential medicines as a measure to reduce prices of drugs.

Quality was a concern raised by Dr Merchant as well. He said that until the right standards, infrastructure and regulations are put into place to determine the efficiency and efficacy of drugs in India, genericisation will not be successful. He was also of the opinion that it is an idea whose time has not arrived yet.

Thus, the panel was divided in its opinion about government's decision to promote generic medicines but unanimous in their stance that patients' well-being should be safeguarded at all costs. The event came to close with a Q&A session between the panelists and the audience.

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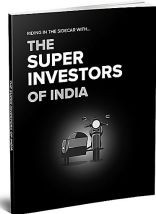
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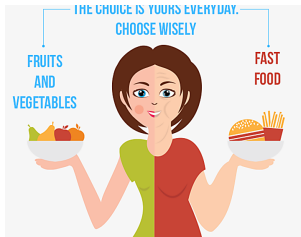
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Period	100%	Yearly Return	Yearly Growth	100% Return	100% Return	100% Return	100% Return	100% Return
10-Dec-05	1,800	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
10-Dec-06	2,081	15.7%	8,403	13.1%	1,077	18.4%	3,760	17.3%
10-Dec-07	2,837	36.3%	9,398	42.3%	1,875	38.4%	5,790	38.4%
10-Dec-08	3,566	25.8%	11,787	46.7%	4,000	41.0%	5,271	38.9%
10-Dec-09	6,119	34.8%	20,187	47.1%	6,400	39.7%	8,501	63.0%
10-Dec-10	2,959	51.8%	9,847	52.4%	2,893	55.2%	3,587	58.1%
10-Dec-11	5,281	75.4%	17,481	61.0%	5,350	60.0%	6,842	67.1%
10-Dec-12	6,125	17.9%	20,300	17.4%	6,102	15.7%	7,261	18.4%
10-Dec-13	4,824	24.4%	15,453	24.4%	4,198	25.7%	5,779	27.4%
10-Dec-14	5,905	27.7%	19,427	25.7%	5,976	30.0%	7,582	31.2%
10-Dec-15	6,504	6.8%	21,171	9.0%	6,327	5.9%	7,628	3.9%
10-Dec-16	6,152	35.9%	27,423	29.5%	6,320	31.0%	10,604	35.5%
Normal Returns	100.0%		100.0%		100.0%		100.0%	
Annualized Returns	14.4%		15.1%		15.0%		14.8%	
Standard Deviation	10.8%		14.0%		10.8%		10.8%	

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