

The Active Consumer

Saving Money With Generics Is The “Name” Of This Game

(NAPSA)—According to the National Institute on Health Care Management, the average price for a prescription drug in 2001 was \$50, and prescription drug costs rose as much as 17 percent last year. As a result, consumers have been forced to dig deeper into their pockets to pay for their medications. However, even if you have health insurance that covers prescriptions, many plans charge more for the higher-priced brand-name drugs.

One way you can cut your drug costs is to ask your doctor or pharmacist if there's a generic drug that can be used in place of the brand-name medicine that's been prescribed. Of the more than 10,000 brand name drugs listed in the Federal Drug Administration's "Orange Book", there are nearly 8,000 available in generic form. Consumers should feel comfortable in considering a generic medication, as generics have a number of benefits, including:

- Generic drugs can cost up to 70 percent less than brand-name medications. According to the Generic Pharmaceutical Association the average price of a brand-name drug in 2000 was \$62.29; for a generic it was \$19.33.

- Generic drugs are fully tested by the FDA and must meet the same standards as brand-name drugs, but are lower in cost because the manufacturers don't have to pay as much for expensive research and development, and sales-related costs.

- Generics have the same active ingredients, quality, safety, effectiveness and strength as their brand-name counterparts; they differ only in name, appearance and, most importantly, price.

- While 45 out of every 100 prescriptions filled in 2001 were for generics, only eight percent of all the dollars spent on drugs went for generic medicines. Com-



Save money by asking your doctor or pharmacist if there's a generic you can use instead of a brand-name drug when you need a prescription medication.

pare that with brand-name drugs that made up 53 out of every 100 prescriptions in 2001 but consumed about 92 percent of all the money spent on drug therapies.

While many patients may not be aware that generics can be used in place of higher-priced medications, even some physicians sometimes overlook generics as a cost-effective alternative to brand-name drugs. However, many doctors are learning more about generics and their benefits. For example, Medco Health Solutions, the nation's leading pharmacy benefits manager, has implemented Generics First, a program that uses pharmacists to educate physicians about generic drugs and provides access to free generic drug samples for the doctors' patients. Programs like this have had an impact: over the past decade, the number of generic drugs sold has more than doubled.

Despite the positive facts about generics, they are not always at the top of a physician's mind. Always ask your doctor or pharmacist if there's a generic drug you can use when you need a prescription medication. It's a smart way to cut down on your healthcare costs.

To learn more about generic drugs, visit www.medcohealth.com.