

**A SURVEY BASED STUDY IN CURRENT SCENARIO OF GENERIC AND BRANDED MEDICINES****KISHOR AHIRE\*, MANISH SHUKLA, MAHESH GATTANI, VINAY SINGH, MEERA SINGH**

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*Received: 19 Apr 2013, Revised and Accepted: 05 Jun 2013***ABSTRACT**

**Objectives:** Cost of the medicines is a concern for the patients. Within India cost of medicines varies, the basic reason behind this is the brand price quoted by the pharmaceutical industries. Survey was undertaken to review and analyse various facts about branded and generic medicines of the same drugs.

**Method:** By survey of Jan Aushadhi Stores price list and other resources by the authors it is found that there is a vast difference between prices of branded and generic medicines. Further survey was conducted for following target groups and individuals. The groups are Literate population (science background), Common public (educated but non science background) and Practicing Pharmacists. The different sets of questionnaire were prepared for each group and survey was conducted. The questions were designed as to check awareness, knowledge and preference of medication.

**Results:** The highlighting results of this survey based project are that more number of consumers want economic alternative to the brand medicines which includes persons with or without science background, a remarkable number of consumers does not have knowledge about generic medicines, most of the physicians do not prefer generic medicines and most of the practicing pharmacists have very less business through generic medicines.

**Conclusion:** Even if generic medicines are going to be made available free of cost at the government hospitals the war of prices between branded and generic may not stop. More stringent rules and regulation are required for making the drugs available at reasonable cost for the masses. For the benefit of the patients, if pharmacist needs to change a brand for generic medicine, should be permitted by law.

**Keywords:** Survey, Questionnaire, Branded medicine, Generics, Regulations.

**INTRODUCTION**

In low- and middle-income countries, originator brand medicines generally cost substantially more than their generic equivalents. Patients purchasing medicines in the private sector pay, on average, 2.6 times more for originator brand than for their lowest-priced generic equivalent. In some low- and middle income countries, this price differential is more than 10-fold. When generic medicines are of assured quality and are offered at lower prices than the corresponding originator brand product, there is a potential for patients and health systems to achieve equivalent health outcomes at a lower cost. The use of generics is therefore often promoted in the public and private sectors to reduce medicine costs, and increase product availability and consumer access [1].

A generic drug is identical, or bioequivalent, to a brand name drug in dosage form, safety, strength, route of administration, quality, performance characteristics, and intended use. On expiration of the originator product's patent term protection, other manufacturing companies may file submissions to regulatory authorities for approval to market generic versions of the originator medicine. Generic drugs may be marketed under the non-proprietary name or as a branded generic. Branded generic drugs have names derived from a combination of the manufacturer's name and the non-proprietary name. This enables the manufacturer to market the product in a way similar to the proprietary product [2]. Generic drugs are cheaper in comparison to branded drugs because there is no need to make investments in R&D as in the case of new drugs. The prevailing fierce competition also makes the manufacturers keep to low prices [3]. Currently, fast moving branded medicines are manufactured by MNCs or large Indian companies. The branded medicines are usually expensive as they are strongly promoted through doctors and chemists and such promotional costs add to their retail prices, i.e., Maximum Retail Price (MRPs). The practice of bribing doctors by pharmaceutical companies to create more and more prescriptions is not recent in the country as well as world over. The unethical promotional practices being adopted by the companies make the essential medicines unaffordable to common man [4].

One of the many ways to control healthcare expenditure is to promote the use of cheaper generic drugs instead of the more expensive branded equivalents. Savings made by using generic

medicines allow more patients to be treated with the same amount of money and mobilizes fund to finance other treatment modalities [5]. While manufacturing generic drugs, the drug companies use the same active ingredients and are shown to work the same way in the body, they have the same risks and benefits as their brand name counterparts. Also, generic drugs have the same quality, strength, purity and stability as brand name drugs. It is seen that Generic Drugs work in the same way and in the same amount of time as branded drugs. New drugs are generally developed under patent protection. The patent protects the investment and the associated expense, viz. research, development, marketing and promotion. When patents are nearing expiration, manufacturers usually approach the Government/Drug Control Department to sell generic versions. In the process, the consumers get generic drugs at substantially lower costs. Both branded and generic drugs are manufactured by conforming to International standards. Brand name drugs are usually given patent protection for 20 years from the date of submission of the patent. This provides protection for the innovator of such drugs to make good the initial costs incurred by him, viz., research development and marketing expenses, to develop the new drug. Many drug companies start manufacturing generic drugs once the patent licence expires for a branded drug. There are only rare circumstances where substituting a generic drug for a brand name product (or vice versa) may not be appropriate for a particular patient. For some patients, generic substitution may be inappropriate due to reactions to inactive ingredients or problems with the pill shape, colour or related characteristics. Patients should become assertive and insist upon the doctors to prescribe generic drugs if available, so that the patient would get the product at the best possible price. Pharmacists also play a vital role in educating the doctors about the availability of generic drugs. Thus the right medication could be given to the patients at the best possible price. Thus if generic drugs are bought by the patient, the patient may not lose money by going in for branded drugs, which are too costly [6]. The essential drug concept adopted in many developing countries promotes use of generic medicines, the main reason for generics is drug price containment through competition to improve access to essential medicines [7].

According to a survey approximately one quarter of physicians expressed concerns about efficacy, almost half reported concerns about quality, and approximately one quarter do not prefer to use

generics as first line medications for themselves or for their family. Because of the vast cost differences between generic and brand-name drugs, these negative beliefs could have important implications for national health-care expenditures [8]. The growth of generic market is more than 12 per cent each year and this is because of increasing number of patent expiries. However, the penetration of affordable generic medicines in the Indian market is

very low and restricted to government hospitals only. The industry, the government and the medical profession are urged to support the generic movement in India and, thus, make available and affordable generic drugs for all patients [9].

Similarities and Differences between brand name and generic drugs [10]:

**Table 1: Similarities and Difference between brand name and generic drugs**

Similarities	Differences
<p>According to the FDA, to substitute a generic for a brand name drug:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ It must contain the same active ingredients (the chemical substance that makes the drug work).</li> <li>■ It must have the same dosage strength (the amount of active ingredients, for example 20 mg or 40 mg).</li> <li>■ It must be the same dosage form (that is, it needs to be available in the same form as the original—for example, as a liquid, pill, etc.)</li> <li>■ It must have the same route of administration (the way the medication is introduced into the body).</li> <li>■ It must deliver similar amounts of the drug to the bloodstream (that is, it needs to deliver a comparable amount of the drug into the bloodstream within a similar time period as the brand name drug).</li> </ul>	<p>Here's how generics and brand name drugs differ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ They look different. (Federal law requires this.)</li> <li>- They could have different sizes, shapes, colours or markings.</li> <li>- They have different names.</li> <li>■ They might have different inactive ingredients.</li> <li>- Drugs are made up of both active and inactive ingredients. Some people may be sensitive to inactive ingredients. For example, some people have reactions to certain dyes used in some drugs.</li> <li>■ The generic costs less than the brand name drug.</li> <li>- The cash price and insurance co-pay is usually lower. Generics can cost between 20 and 80 percent less, but keep in mind that cost is only one factor when considering the right medication for your condition.</li> <li>■ Generics vary by manufacturer, which means you could receive different versions based on where you purchase your medications and what type of generic they dispense.</li> <li>- Different pharmacies carry different generics.</li> <li>- Even the same pharmacy may change generic suppliers.</li> </ul>

**MATERIAL AND METHOD**

A survey was conducted among the following group to know about their opinion towards the generic and branded medicines:

S. No.	Type	Number
1	Literate population (science background )	100
2	Local population	100
3	Pharmacists	50

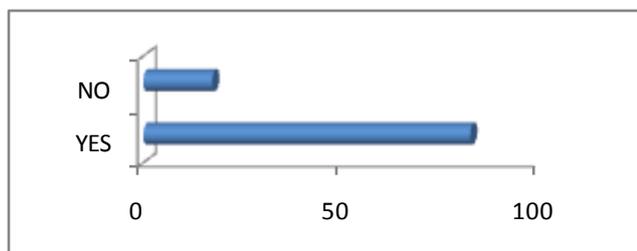
The different sets of questionnaire were prepared for different group and survey was conducted. The questions were designed as to check:

- Awareness
- Knowledge and
- Preference of medication

**For professionally qualified (science background) individuals:**

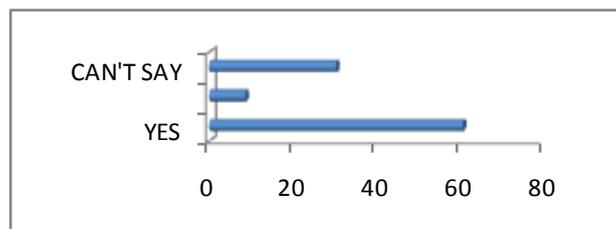
1. Do you know that government of India has passed a law about generic medicines?

	Number in %
YES	82.6
NO	17.40



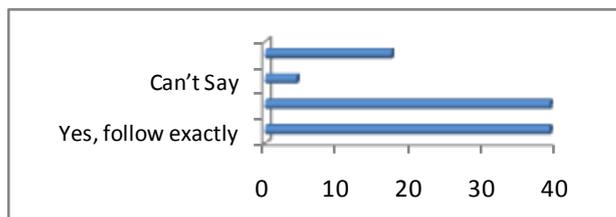
2. Do generic medicines have same effect as branded medicines?

	Number in %
YES	60.86
NO	8.69
Can't Say	30.43



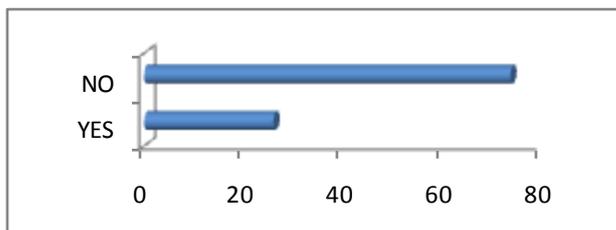
3. Do generic medicines follow the FDA guidelines as branded medicines?

	Number in %
Yes, follow exactly	39.21
Yes, certain parameters	39.21
Can't Say	4.34
NO	17.39



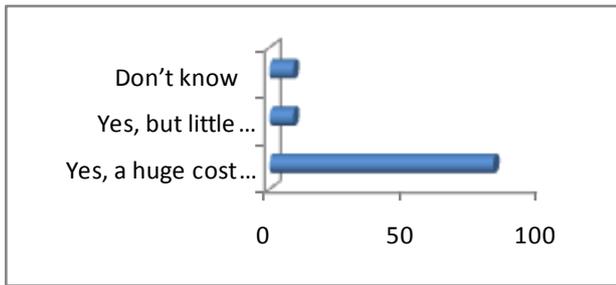
4. Are you using any generic medicine currently?

	Number in %
YES	26.08
NO	73.92



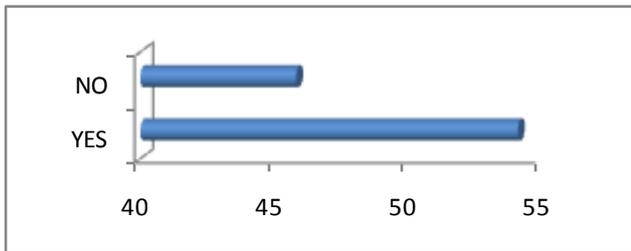
5. Did you find any cost difference between generic and branded medicines?

	Number in %
Yes, a huge cost difference	82.60
Yes, but little cost difference	8.69
Don't know	8.69



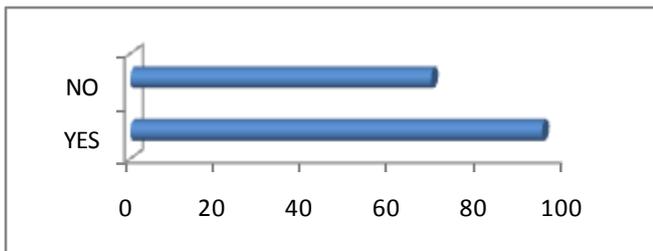
6. Do you know any medical shop where generic medicines are available?

	Number in %
YES	54.16
NO	45.84



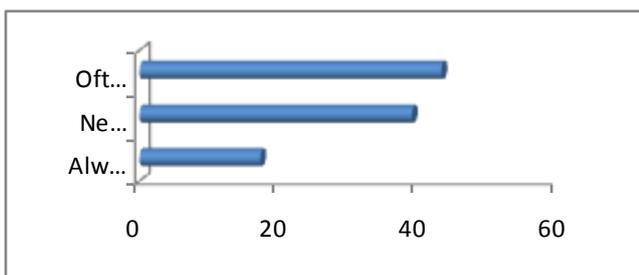
7. If no would you like to know such medical stores?

	Number in %
YES	94.44
NO	5.56



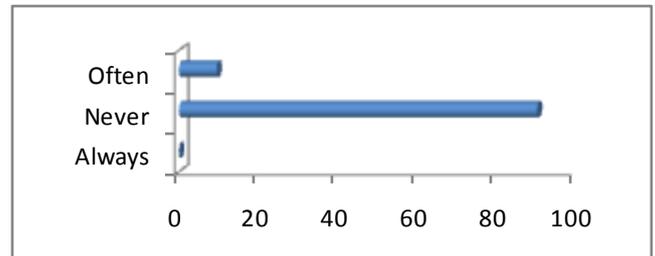
8. Have you ever asked for generic medicines in medical stores (pharmacy)?

	Number in %
Always	17.39
Never	39.213
Often	43.47



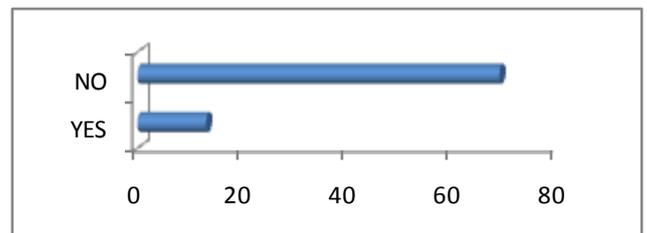
9. Have your doctor ever asked you if the cost of a medicine is a concern to you before he actually prescribed the medicine?

	Number in %
Always	0
Never	90.47
Often	9.53



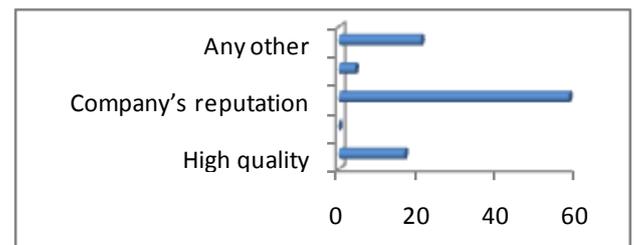
10. Has doctor or pharmacist ever asked you to switch from branded to generic alternative?

	Number in %
YES	13.05
NO	86.95



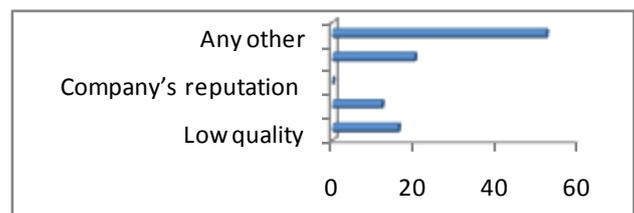
11. According to you what is the reason behind high cost of branded drugs?

	Number in %
High quality	16.66
Better therapeutic Effect	0
Company's reputation	58.33
Can't Say	4.16
Any other	20.83



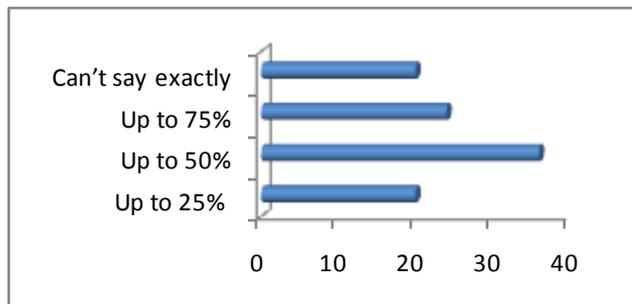
12. According to you why generic medicines have lesser cost?

	Number in %
Low quality	16
Lesser therapeutic effect	12
Company's reputation	0
Don't know	20
Any other	52



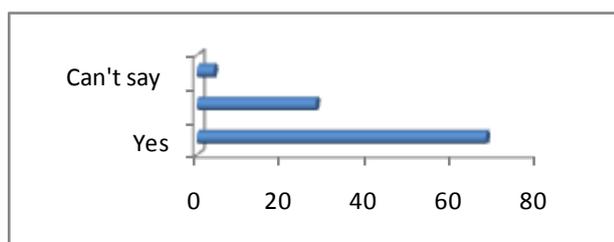
13. Approximately how much do you think you can save per month by using generic medicines?

	Number in %
Up to 25%	20
Up to 50%	36
Up to 75%	24
Can't say exactly	20



14. Do you think Maharashtra government should come up with stringent law for generic medicines?

	Number in %
Yes	68
No	28
Can't say	4



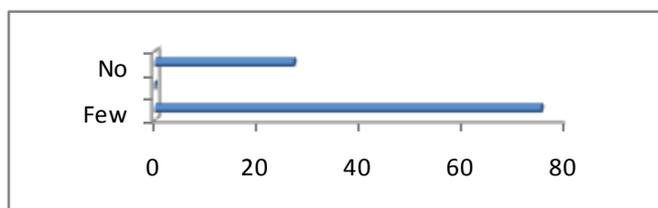
15. What are the disadvantages of generic medicines according to you?

Majority of the population said generics are less effective compared to its brand name medicine, many of them perceive generics to be of poor quality and few don't know about disadvantages.

**For the pharmacist working in medical store (pharmacy):**

1. Do you keep generic medicines in your pharmacy?

	Number in %
Few	75
All	0
No	25



2. If no why? Specify—

Pharmacists gave different reasons behind not keeping generic medicines, most of the reasons are-

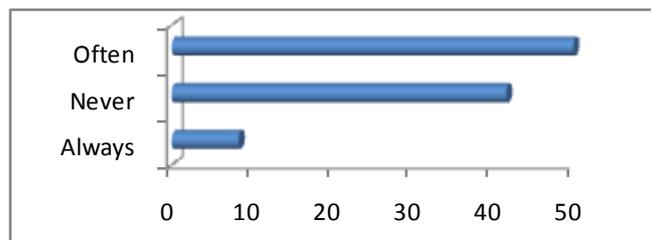
- Less demand
- Less or no prescription
- Don't know

3. How many patients ask you for generic medicines/cheaper alternative to brand?

Majority of pharmacists responded as none followed by few and very less. Many of them said only 5 to 10 % patients ask about generics.

4. Do you suggest generic medicines to patients?

	Number in %
Always	8.33
Never	41.66
Often	50



5. Is there any availability issue of generic medicines?

More than 95 % pharmacist said there is no availability issue.

6. What kind of difficulties do you face about generic medicine availability or sale?

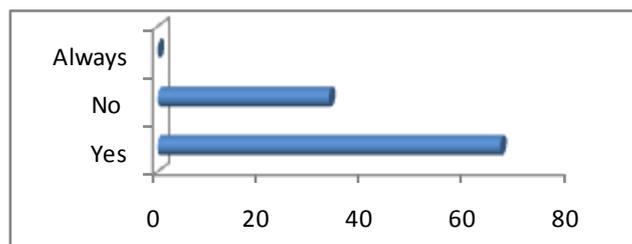
According to pharmacists most of the patients strictly follow prescription which mostly has branded medicines and few of them said there is very less demand of generics. Some percentage said that there is no difficulty in keeping generic medicines.

7. Which pharmaceutical industries make generic medicines?

Majority of the pharmacists were aware that large no. of companies deal in generics, they named a few prominent ones which included GSK, Cipla, Ranbaxy, Lupin, FDC, Alkem, Intas, Emcure etc.

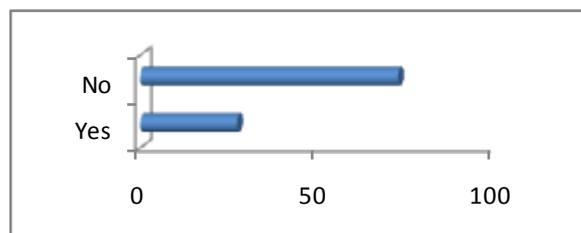
8. Do you personally use the generic medicines instead of branded?

	Number in %
Yes	66.66
No	33.33
Always	0



9. Is there any quality difference between generic and branded medicines according to you?

	Number in %
Yes	27.27
No	72.73



10. Why generic medicines have lesser price than branded?

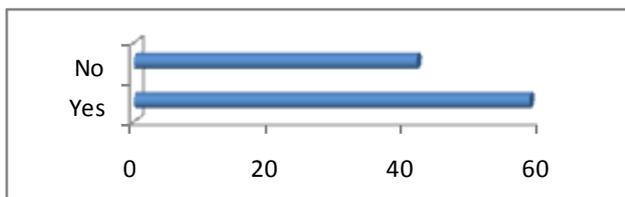
Pharmacists said that less price of generics could be because of low investment in marketing, company policies and reputation, quality difference and very few were aware about the patent expiration of parent molecule.

11. What are the disadvantages of generic medicines?

More than 90 % of pharmacists responded saying none and few find poor quality is major disadvantage.

12. Government with new law, is making generic medicines available free of cost at government hospitals, do you think it will affect your business?

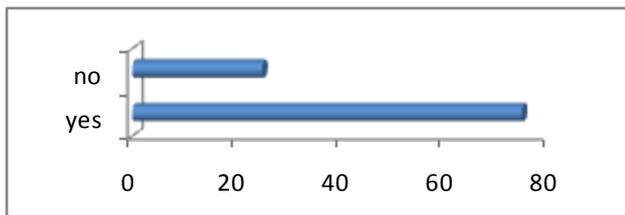
	Number in %
Yes	58.33
No	41.67



**For Educated individual (non-science background):**

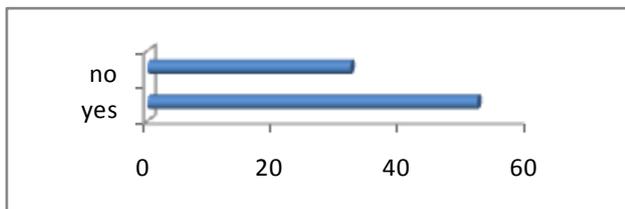
1. Do you know about generic medicines?

	Number in %
Yes	75
No	25



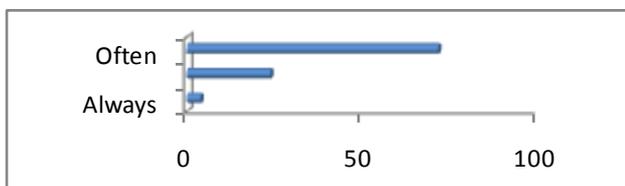
2. Do you know that generic medicines are available in cheaper price in medical stores?

	Number in %
Yes	52
No	32



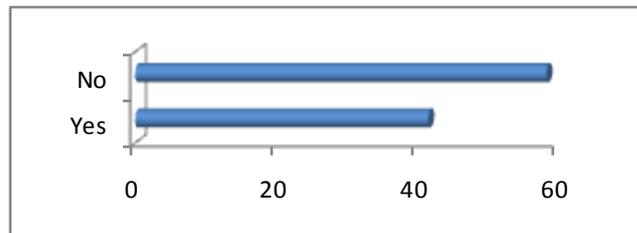
3. Does your doctor give preference to medicine with lesser price?

	Number in %
Always	4
Never	24
Often	72



4. Have you ever asked your doctor for medicine having lesser price?

	Number in %
Yes	41.6
No	58.4

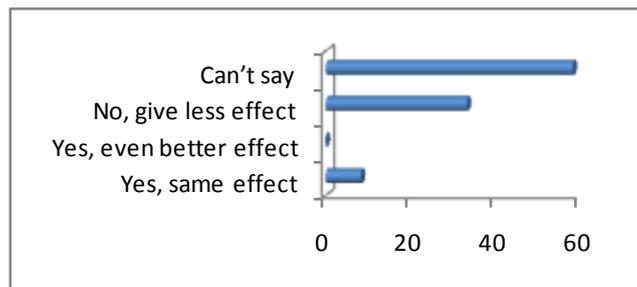


2. If yes then what did they replied or suggested?

Most of doctors go for branded medicines stating their quick and best response compared to its generic version, many said branded are of good quality and therapeutically more effective.

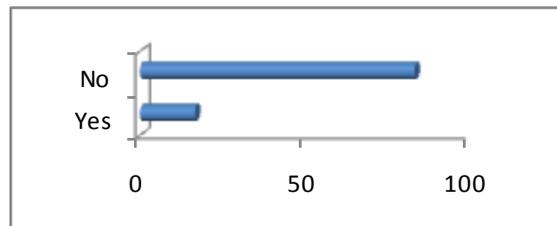
3. Do you think medicines with less price can give same effect as of medicines with higher price (having same drug)?

	Number in %
Yes, same effect	8.3
Yes, even better effect	0
No, give less effect	33.3
Can't say	58.33



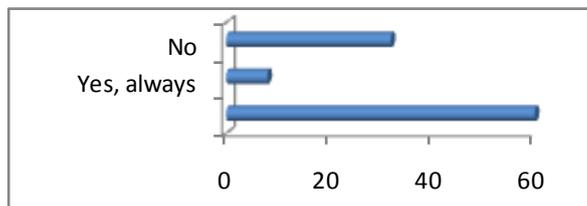
4. Are generic medicines as safe as branded medicines?

	Number in %
Yes	16.66
No	83.33



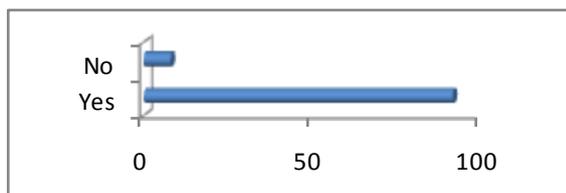
5. Once you know that generic medicines are less in price would you still like to pay more for branded medicines?

	Number in %
Yes, only in case of emergency	60
Yes, always	8
No	32



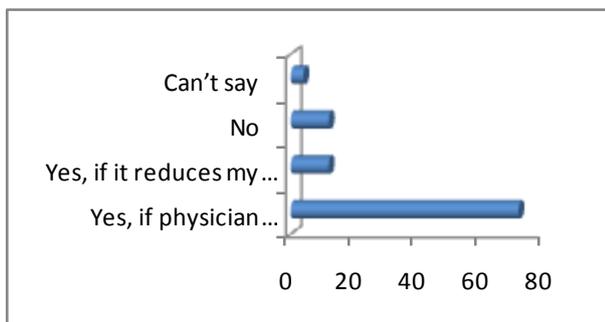
6. Would you like to know if there is any cheaper alternative to above medicine?

	Number in %
Yes	92
No	8



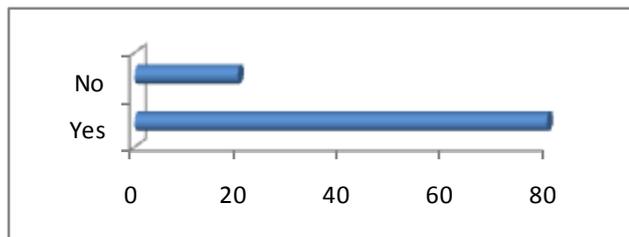
7. If generic alternative for your branded medicine is available, would you like to switch to generic alternative?

	Number in %
Yes, if physician permits	72
Yes, if it reduces my bill to half	12
No	12
Can't say	4



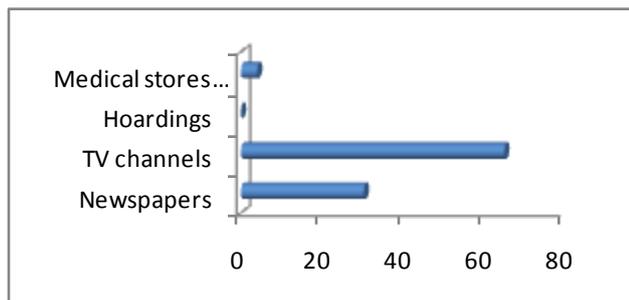
8. During the last three months have you seen or heard any advertisement, news or information encouraging people to use generic medicines?

	Number in %
Yes	80
No	20



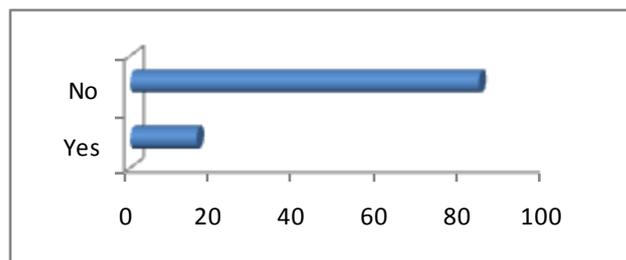
9. Where have you seen or heard any information regarding generic medicines?

	Number in %
Newspapers	30.4
TV channels	65.2
Hoardings	0
Medical stores (Pharmacy)	4



10. Do you follow the TV advertisement for selecting your medication?

	Number in %
Yes	16
No	84



**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Survey conducted among different groups of population showed various opinions about generic drugs. The survey result of professionally qualified science background individuals showed that people were quite aware about various government policies about generic drugs. Nearly 60% of individuals said that the generics are as effective as branded medicines. More than 82% individuals found a huge cost difference between generic and branded medicines. More than 45% people didn't know such stores where generic medicines are available but when they were asked if they would like to know such store near about 95% responded positively.

Though professionally qualified 40% science background individuals never asked about generic medicines in medical stores and about 44% asked often, more than 90% said their doctor never asked about the cheaper alternatives or about generic version of branded medicines. More than 58% of people thought reason of high cost of the branded medicines is due to company's reputation and 16% said it could be the high quality of branded medicines that make them costly. The survey results of pharmacist shows that many of them do not keep all kind of generic medicines. 75% of pharmacists said that they keep few regular generic medicines. The main reason behind not keeping generic medicines was less demand from the patients. As per the pharmacist in the survey 5-10% of patients asked about generic or cheaper alternatives to brand, more than 40% pharmacists never suggest generic medicines to patients, though they were well aware about all major generic manufacturing companies. Besides all above when they were asked about their business regarding new government policy of free drug distribution more than 58% pharmacist said that it may affect their business.

The survey result of educated but non-science background shows that a good number nearly 75% of population knew about the generic medicine, but more than 58% of them never asked their physician about generic medicine or cheaper alternative to branded medicine. In a few instances when patient asked doctor about generic medicine physicians replied that branded medicines will act quickly and effectively compared to generic medicine. This shows the attitude of physicians about generic medicines. More than 58% of individuals were not aware about effects of generic medicines while nearly 34% said that generics are less effective than branded. Near about 84% individual thought generics are not as safe as branded, but 92% were ready to know the cheaper alternative to branded. The war of generics versus branded getting popular in country like India and electronic and print media is approaching to this issue significantly. More than 80% people in the survey got aware about OTC and generic medicines via these media and consulted with the physician about these generic medicines rather than blindly following the TV or other advertisements.

**CONCLUSION**

Survey of 100 science background individuals, 100 educated but non-science background individual and 50 Pharmacist was carried out to throw light on generics versus branded medicine scenario in India particularly in state of Maharashtra and Rajasthan. It is

obvious from survey that educated and non educated would like to have access to generic medicine and want to have more knowledge and information about generics from the doctors as most of them do not like to violet prescription. Thus it could be suggested that doctors can write generic alternative to branded medicines for the benefit of the patients as most of the individuals in survey have conclusively said that they would like to have cheaper alternative to branded medicines. There is strong belief amongst the educated individuals that if doctor has prescribed the branded medicines it cannot be changed and generic alternative may have less effect. This myth was revealed in survey of pharmacists as most of them know generic medicines are not compromised medicines and could be as efficacious as branded medicines. The main reason of less sell of generic medicines is due to lack of such prescriptions received from physicians. There is also willingness from pharmacist side to help the people by supplying generic alternative to branded medicines which the author belief should be supported by law.

Food and drug administration has stringent rules and regulations in bringing out generic medicines in public use thus there is no reason to believe that generics are substandard than branded (though does not reflect from survey of educated people and therefore people need to be informed in this regard). India is a leading country in Pharma manufacturing sector and is serving humanity by producing cost effective but quality medicines in the entire world and also supplying these medicines to most of the countries, at the same time the poor population in India is still unable to get access to modern medicines. Thus, the new regulation of generic medicine and implementation of concept of Jan Aushadhi Stores and Free Drug Distribution Centre is a remarkably positive step taken by the government. In near future, one can get to see the benefits of these policies.

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