

NPPA to launch campaign for consumer awareness

Sources say Department of Consumers Affairs has agreed to help build healthcare awareness with specific reference to medicines

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NEW DELHI: Taking a leaf out of Jago Grahak's successful campaign to increase awareness about adulterated food items and overpricing of goods, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) is also set to launch a similar campaign soon.

For this, the apex drug price regulator has roped in Ministry of Consumer Affairs to educate people about the efficacy of generic drugs in the category of essential and life saving medicines.

"People residing either in urban or rural areas believe that generic drugs are not as effective as branded. We have to break that myth by creating awareness that generic drugs has all the required medicinal effectiveness to cure any disease. People have the right to get essential and life saving drugs at affordable price," a senior NPPA official told *Millennium Post*. The official further added that generic drugs are far cheaper than their brand name equivalents. Sometimes, it's even three-four times cheaper.

Sources in the apex drug regulatory body said, "The Department of Consumers Affairs has agreed to take up a joint campaign to build healthcare awareness with specific reference to use of medicines. The drive would

HELPING DECIDE



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be launched very soon."

"The drive will target not only consumers, but also other stakeholders such as state governments and state drug controllers, which have an important role to play in the implementation of DPCO 2013," the official said.

Hailing the move, J Radhakrishnan, Health Secretary of Tamil Nadu, said, "This is a very good move. With regard to high cost life saving drugs, generic medicine will prove to be a boon to the poor people and creating awareness will encourage EWS patients to demand generic drugs at the stores of their own. Tamil Nadu is already supplying

three generic drugs through all public health institutions and Tamil Nadu Medical Board of Corporation. We are also running subsidized run pharmaceutical stores through cooperative department."

Not only states, even pharma bodies have also appreciated the move. Welcoming the step, DG Shah, the general secretary of Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance, said, "Creating awareness about generic drugs is a good thing. This effort, hopefully, will help in curbing Chhattisgarh like incidents."

Given the fact that there is acute shortage of Jan Aushadhi stores, NPPA has

planned initiatives to make such stores get opened at every primary healthcare centre, so that medicines at affordable prices should be in the reach of every single person of the country.

According to the data provided by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, only 99 Jan Aushadhi stores are functional out of the 170 stores opened across the country. Punjab has the highest number of functional generic drug stores as the state has 21 functional stores out of 24 opened, while in Rajasthan not even a single store is functional out of total 53 stores.

The NPPA will implement the consumer awareness scheme in collaboration with Consumer Affairs Ministry on 50:50 cost sharing basis. The scheme aims at promoting consumer awareness of generic medicine (Jan Aushadhi scheme), precautions to be taken in the purchase and consumption of medicines, dissemination of information regarding ceiling price of scheduled drugs under DPCO 2013 and the Essential Commodities Act 1955 for protecting consumer's interest.

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation requires generic drugs to have the same quality and performance as the innovator drug or branded generics.