

INJETI SRINIVAS

'We need to promote the concept of generic drugs in the country'

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NEW DELHI: The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), popularly known as the drug pricing watch dog is a government body appointed to fix or revise the prices of controlled bulk drugs and formulations. It also enforces prices and availability of the medicines in the country, under the Drugs (prices control) Order. It monitors the prices of de-controlled drugs in order to keep them at reasonable levels, under ministry of chemicals and fertilisers. Injeti Srinivas, its newly appointed chairman, spoke to HT on a range of issues. Excerpts:

Which are the issues at NPPA that require immediate focus?

We have a clear mandate under which we have to work towards creating an eco-system that has all the essential drugs available at reasonable prices. We are also looking at creating a strong and regular platform where we can interact with all stakeholders including pharmacists, industry representatives, state governments, and social health experts among many others.

How does NPPA regulate the availability of drugs across the country?

Primarily, we are dependent on state governments for the information about drug availability across states. Otherwise, we don't get to know about shortage until there is no public outcry. However, we are working on developing a real time data base. Once it is done, we will get accurate details on availability of drugs in



every nook and corner of the country.

How do you think NPPA can serve society?

We can serve patients who survive under the burden of expensive medicines. With the application of the new drug pricing policy, the prices of drugs have come down significantly. We are also aggressively penalising the companies for overcharging the consumer. However, we need to re-consider the concept of branded generics. A branded drug can be 10 times more expensive than a generic variant. Companies charge ₹100 for packaging a drug under a fancy wrapper and a brand name, while the same generic drug is available for ₹10 in the market. We need to promote the concept of generic drugs in the country, which are as efficient, effective and safe as a branded generic drug is.

What are the future plans?

We propose to have a central scheme for financial assistance for setting up a price monitoring unit where we would hire young professionals to handle advance technology. The feedback would make our enforcements and audits much more accurate and stricter.

Pricing