

GTVANCHOR OUT-PATIENTS AND PATIENTS IN GENERAL WARDS CAN AVAIL OF FREE MEDICINES

AIIMS to open first pharmacy to provide generic drugs free of cost

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NEARLY two years after the project was given the green signal, and five years after it was first conceptualised, AIIMS is finally set to begin its first free pharmacy this month. The store, which will be run by the Central government's HLL Lifecare Limited, will supply generic categories of essential drugs for out-patients and those admitted in general wards.

The list of drugs was finalised after consultations with heads of all departments last year.

The departments were asked to identify essential drugs in their specialties, the generic versions of which will be supplied free.

Unlike other hospitals under the Central and Delhi government, so far AIIMS — an autonomous institute — did not have any system of free supply of prescribed medicines. It only made available drugs for patients admitted in general wards.

Medical Superintendent of AIIMS Dr D K Sharma said a free pharmacy had been conceptualised a long time ago and was expected to start on January 1. But

due to some last-minute detailing, the project would begin from "mid-January."

"For the first time, patients who are treated in the OPDs will be given free medicines on the basis of hospital prescriptions. The store will come up in the building that was earlier used as a temporary night shelter, next to the paediatric OPD," Dr Sharma said.

He said in the next two weeks, instructions will be issued to hospitals to prescribe generic drugs instead of specifying brands in prescriptions.

According to authorities, this



Pharmacy is set to open mid-January.

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pharmacy will be the first centralised medicine supply system across different departments and specialty centres at the institute. It will help the pharmacology department monitor adverse drug reactions, prescription patterns and drug efficacy.

The move to fast-track the free pharmacy comes on the heels of the closure of a subsidised private round-the-clock pharmacy that had been supplying medicines at 56 per cent of the market price.

The pharmacy had to be shut down after its licence expired last month. Further, there had been a series of complaints against the private pharmacy regarding substitution of prescribed drugs in departments with costlier substitutes. A doctor in the department of neurology had also complained of side effects from an anti-epilepsy drug substituted by the pharmacy.

An inquiry committee set up by the institute had found the store guilty of substituting five of 10 essential drugs in the complaints it investigated. A showcause notice had been issued to the pharmacy in September, but it was closed only after the expiry of its licence period three months later.

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