

HEADACHE FOR GLAXOSMITHKLINE

After Crocin Advance, Calpol under regulatory lens

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After Crocin Advance, it's the turn of GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Pharmaceutical's top-selling paracetamol brand Calpol syrup to come under the regulator's scanner for allegedly overcharging consumers. The Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has barred the sale of Calpol 120mg syrup in the state and issued a show-cause notice to GSK Pharmaceuticals for selling the medicine at a price higher than the ceiling.

While GSK Pharma claims the product is out of price control because of its strength, Maharashtra FDA officials maintain the company has tweaked the therapeutic dosage of the original product to skip the price control ambit. The state drug regulator is also planning to write to the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), requesting action against the company.

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MORE TROUBLE

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medicines under National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) having specific strengths and dosage. Since Calpol Suspension 120mg, in market for more than 30 years, is not part of NLEM nor DPCO schedule 2013, it is outside its purview," said a GSK spokesperson.

Calpol is one of the best-selling prescription products of GSK Pharmaceuticals with annual sales of ₹84.3 crore during the 12 months ended February. Paracetamol, an analgesic, is usually used for treatment of fever and pain.

Recently, Crocin Advance, another leading paracetamol brand sold by the group's subsidiary GSK Consumer Healthcare, also faced regulatory action. NPPA, the central agency monitoring prices of medicines across the country, has asked GSK to immediately reduce the maximum retail price of Crocin Advance, rejecting the company's plea for exemption from price control. The authority is also expected to soon impose a penalty on GSK Consumer Healthcare for selling Crocin Advance at a higher price.

According to Maharashtra FDA Assistant Commissioner Girish Vakhariya, there is already a 'stop sale' order on various brands of paracetamol such as Crocin Advance 500mg and Crocin Suspension as these products were found overpriced. "Our investigation in the Crocin matter is over and we will soon refer this to NPPA recommending further action on the company, including penalty for overcharging." On Friday, shares of GSK Pharmaceutical ended at ₹2,589 on the BSE, up 0.72 per cent from the previous close.

Brief