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'Make licensing of three anti-cancer drugs compulsory'

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NEW DELHI

The health ministry on Wednesday recommended three anti-cancer drugs—trastuzumab, ixabepilone and dasatinib—for compulsory licensing, which would allow the government to produce generic versions of the patented medicines and sell them at a cheaper price.

The ministry sent its recommendation to the department of industrial policy and promotion. "We have sent the document and made our arguments in favour of issuing compulsory license in these cases," said health secretary P.K. Pradhan. "This is not a random process. We have judiciously decided and made our suggestions. The health ministry's role in this is recommendatory and the committee will take a decision after careful deliberation."

Currently, a months' dose of each of the three drugs cost more than ₹ 1 lakh.

Under the Indian Patents Act, a compulsory licence can be issued for a drug if the medicine is deemed unaffordable. Generic drug manufacturers can then bypass the patent.

India issued its first compulsory licence in August last year when Natco Pharma won the rights to manufacture Bayer AG's anti-cancer drug Nexavar.

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