

New antibiotic policy can't curb illegal sale

THE new antibiotic policy that restricts sale of new generation of antibiotics is a significant step in addressing the issue of drug resistance which came into focus with the superbug episode. But experts say the older antibiotics will continue to be sold without prescription in violation of rules.

Under the new rules, newer or third generation of antibiotics will be sold under prescription and the chemists will maintain the record of the sales. Doctors will give two prescriptions for these antibiotics, of which one will be retained by the chemist.

Some of the still newer antibiotics such as Carbapenems, including ertapenem, imipenem and meropenem, tigecycline, and daptomycin, will be available only in hospitals.

However, chemists in Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan went on a strike on Monday protesting against the new rules.

They said maintaining such detailed records for every sale is next to impossible. It will also be inconvenient for the patients since all the drugs given in a prescription are sometimes not found at the same chemist shop.

In addition since many patients do not have the



City chemists asked to maintain sale records.

money, they purchase antibiotics on day-by-day basis.

They are also against restrictions of 16 drugs and antibiotics which will be sold directly by drug manufacturers to the tertiary care hospitals.

Dr Ranjit Roy Choudhry, one of the experts who prepared the antibiotic policy, said that sales of the antibiotics will not be impacted. The rules are only for third generation of antibiotics and the rest will continue to be sold as they are.

"There is no need for the new schedule, Hx. Under the current Schedule H, no antibiotic should be sold without prescription. Since government has failed to implement it, a new schedule has been created," Dr C. M. Gulati, editor, *Monthly Index of Medical Specialties* said.

Savita Verma/Delhi