

Significant reduction in cancer drug prices

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The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), in a recent meeting, invoked extraordinary powers in public interest, under Para 19 of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 to bring 42 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs under price control, through Trade Margin Rationalisation.

So far, 57 anti-cancer drugs are already under price control as scheduled formulations. 42 non-scheduled anti-cancer medicines have now been selected for price regulation by restricting trade margin on the selling price (MRP) up to 30%. These would cover 72 formulations and 355 brands as per data available with NPPA. More data is being collected from hospitals and manufacturers to finalise the list.

The manufacturers have been given seven days to recalculate the prices and inform the NPPA, State Drug Controllers, stockists and retailers. The revised prices shall come into effect from 8th March, 2019.

As per data available with NPPA, the MRP for 105 brands will be reduced up to 85%. An approximate estimate is that after taking into account the combination drugs too, there will be a minimum saving of Rs. 200 crore per annum to cancer patients on account of this intervention.

Dr. BS Ajaikumar, Chairman & CEO of Healthcare Global Enterprises points out, "The Government's move to provide relief to cancer patients regarding treatment costs is welcome but while it may appear to benefit the patients momentarily, it will be detrimental to them in the long run. We need to encourage cashless treatments and strive towards implementing universal healthcare for all sections of the society, irrespective of rich or poor providing quality healthcare to everyone. The government should also improve the per capita income of the citizens of this country as one percent of the population cannot control 80 percent of the wealth. There should be better distribution of income and purchasing power, so that people can have access to products with the right price and get quality treatment at the right time. This will lead to better patient safety, good outcome, and India could be the leader in research and development in the medical field."