

Editorial

Dear Readers,

As we all know, the concept of health insurance is very strong in the western world and like other systems, health insurance also got migrated to India and became popular but there are many parts in India where the traditional healthcare system prevails. India's growth has created substantial economic burden on the common man as there is a price hike in almost every aspect of living. The cost of prescription drugs has become vital component of almost every family's budget. India is called world's pharmacy as it supplies bulk medicine and cheaper life-saving medicines like antiretroviral medicines (ARVs) for HIV treatment, malaria and tuberculosis treatments to the developing countries. This has been possible because there were no patents until 2005. India started granting medicine patents from 2005 to comply with WTO under which the life of a patent is 20 years. Patented (branded) medicines are generally expensive due to lack of competition. When there is lack of availability of generics, if the brand producers are able to meet the shortage, question could be: Would the average consumer be able to afford the branded drugs?

Recent good news on Glivec, an anticancer medicine manufactured by the Swiss pharmaceutical industry Novartis came as a relief to the patients. The generic version costs about Rs. 10,000/- per patient per month whereas the cost of the drug if patented would have costed about Rs. 1.2 lakh per patient per month.

Novartis has led a seven year long legal battle to patent the medicine in India, but before granting a patent the affordability of pharmaceutical drug is considered and glivec failed the test of invention and patentability under the patent act so patent was not granted to Novartis which is landmark judgment of Supreme Court.

Now the concern is, would the pharma companies think before investing on research & development in India and let us hope that the research & developmental activities are not discouraged due to the Supreme Court judgment.

Dr. Shobha Rani R Hiremath

Editor-in-Chief