

# Pharmaceutical discounts: what it will mean to patients

*Prices will change for a total of 8,360 medicines but critics say patients are in danger of bearing the consequences of market deregulation due to the wrong pricing of important medicines*

By Costas Papachlimintzos

In its latest drive to curb healthcare costs, the government has announced a new price list for medicines which includes discounts averaging 5%. The new price regime entered into force for manufacturers, packagers and importers on February 17 and will apply for wholesalers and private pharmacies on February 26.

The new price catalogue contains a total of 8,360 medicines, of which 5,425 are generic and 2,935 brand/reference listed drugs. According to the National Organisation of Medicines (EOF), the new price list will result in an average price reduction of 4.7%. Prices will fall for a total of 7,495 medicines, while no medicine will see its price increased.

"The state has given EOF the jurisdiction to submit a proposal for setting the price of medicines. The current repricing has been completed successfully," Dimitris Lintzeris, EOF chairman, told the Athens Views. A public agency, EOF is responsible for evaluating and authorising pharmaceutical and other health products.

Konstantinos Frouzis, the chairman of the Hellenic Association of Pharmaceutical Companies (SFEE), has raised several objections to the new list. "The new price list, while it is in the right direction in terms of cutting

costs, it includes some very serious mistakes, some of which stem from existing legislation," Frouzis told this newspaper.

"As a result, it disrupts every part of the pharmaceutical chain, but mainly affects patients, who are in danger of bearing the consequences of market deregulation due to the wrong pricing of important medicines," he added.

According to Lintzeris, "EOF has implemented the ministerial decisions related to the repricing in a scientifically flawless and transparent way and in regular consultation with [drug] license owners."

As he stressed: "I have repeatedly underlined the fact that

EOF has managed to overcome its insufficient staffing, due to the scientific competence and the enthusiasm of its employees."

Frouzis, on the other hand, argues that the new price list has "created a huge disruption in the pricing policy of other EU countries - since Greece is a reference state for other countries - without any benefit for our country".

The SFEE head says he believes that "this should be taken into serious consideration by the state, especially during the Greek

presidency of the EU Council", underlining that "Sfee will work together with all stakeholders for the smooth completion of the repricing procedure within the next days, so that problems of supplying the market will be avoided."

Frouzis called on the health minister "to impose the due process of the law, which wisely protects the right of citizens to have access to treatment and medicines and which supports the investments that our sector has implemented, even in this period of great depression, and which we aim to increase in order to help our country exit this dead end."

As a result of the new list, the annual spending on pharmaceuticals by the national healthcare provider EOPYY and public-sector hospitals is expected to fall by roughly €202m (5.48%) and €36m (2.62%) respectively. The wide-ranging set of policies implemented during the past three years in the pharmaceuticals sector have delivered significant results in terms of cost cutting, as both the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund have indicated in their latest reports

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**Konstantinos Frouzis,  
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**Dimitris Lintzeris insists that the current re-pricing of pharmaceuticals was done successfully**

on the progress of the Greek adjustment programme.

Electronic prescriptions now account for more than 90% of all outpatient pharmaceutical prescriptions within EOPYY. In addition, branded prescriptions now make up about 1% of total outpatient prescriptions. In addition, the large backlog of generic pharmaceuticals awaiting pricing has been substantially reduced. The use of generic drugs, however, is still low, at about 19% market share in both volume and value, which is well below the target set in the memorandum that the government has signed with the troika.