

Americans turn to generic medications in 2010: report

April 22 2011, by Deborah Braconnier

(Medical Xpress) -- In a new report released by the IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics, the results show that over 78% of the almost four billion prescriptions written in the U.S. in 2010 were for generic drugs. The top 10 prescribed drugs for the year were all generic medications, and there were only three brand name drugs which made the top 25 list. This information is good for consumers as it means medication costs are lowering, however not as good for the pockets of the pharmaceutical companies.

The top medication on the list was once again the painkiller Hydrocodone with 131.2 million prescriptions, up three million from 2009. This increase in prescription painkillers is one of the reasons the White House is looking for new ways to reduce abuse and misuse of opioid painkillers.

The remaining drugs in the top 10 were, in order, generic Zocor (cholesterol-reducing statin), Lisinopril (blood pressure drug), generic Synthroid ([thyroid hormone](#)), generic Norvasc (angina/blood pressure), generic Prilosec (antacid), [Azithromycin](#) (antibiotic), Amoxicillin (antibiotic), generic Glucophage (diabetes), and Hydrochlorothiazide (water pill to reduce blood pressure).

Of course when it came to top spending on [prescription drugs](#), the list went back to non-generics, with the top sales spot going to Lipitor with \$7.2 billion in sales for 2010. Rounding out the top three were Nexium (selling \$6.3 billion) and Plavix (selling \$6.1 billion).

The shift to more drugs becoming available as generic is growing as many top selling drugs are coming up for patent relinquishment. 2010 saw Aricept (Alzheimer) and Flomax (prostate) medications go generic. Zocor, the 2nd on the list of most dispensed last year, was a huge seller for Merck before it went generic. Lipitor, the top selling brand-name drug in 2010 is set to go generic later this year, and this will give consumers a drop in cost and the pharmaceutical company will take a hit in profit.

This increase in generic prescriptions has also meant a reduced cost for consumers, employers, and insurers responsible for healthcare costs. Compared to 2009, the average cost of prescription copayments went down 20 cents to \$10.73 in 2010.

More information: Report: [PDF](#)

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