

# Considerable potential savings with generic medicines

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Substituting branded medications with drugs containing the same active ingredients (generics) can save considerable amounts of money. A study at the Center for Medical Statistics, Informatics and Intelligent Systems (CeMSIIS) at the MedUni Vienna in cooperation with the Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions, has calculated the potential savings from generic medications used in the treatment of common conditions such as hypertension, hyperlipidaemia and diabetes mellitus. The potential annual financial savings for health insurance companies stand at around 18 per cent, equating to tens of millions of Euros.

The study analysed data collected from 8.3 million people across Austria (equivalent to 98.5 per cent of the entire insured population of Austria) between 2009 and 2012. Three groups of medications - medications that are used to treat conditions that are widespread among the population - were taken into account: drugs against hypertension, hyperlipidaemia, a fat metabolism disease, and [diabetes mellitus](#).

In 2012, [health insurance companies](#) spent Euro 231.3 million, Euro 77.8 million and Euro 91.9 million on anti-hypertensive, lipid-lowering and diabetes-treating medications respectively. The calculations show that substituting the medications with cheaper generic versions (same active ingredient, same dose) would have saved Euro 52.2 million (22.6%), Euro 15.9 million (20.5%) and Euro 4.1 million (4.5%) in costs. This amounts to a potential saving of an average of 18 per cent.

## **Price difference has grown in recent years**

A comparison with previous years, looking back to 2009, shows an ever-growing increase in the potential savings. While the difference for anti-hypertensive medications was 15.2 per cent in 2009, this had risen to 22.6 per cent by 2012. Lipid-lowering medications had a potential saving of 9.2 per cent in 2009, rising to 20.5 per cent by 2012. Only diabetes medications experienced a drop, with the potential saving falling from 5.6 per cent to 4.4 per cent.

"This study showed that substituting high-cost medications for common conditions such as hypertension, hyperlipidaemia and diabetes mellitus with the cheapest medications available on the market with the identical active ingredient and equally good effect can help Austrian health insurance companies to save up to Euro 72 million a year," explains Georg Heinze from the Center for Medical Statistics, Informatics and Intelligent Systems (CeMSIIS) at the MedUni Vienna.

## CeMSIIS expands its spectrum of research

The Center for Medical Statistics, Informatics and Intelligent Systems (CeMSIIS) at the MedUni Vienna has established two new research focus areas in order to consolidate its existing expertise and to offer this expertise in new cooperations with clinical and other research partners.

The focus area "Data Science for Personalized Medicine" analyses relationships between molecular data (such as sequenced genomes) and clinical outcomes in order to get closer to the goals of personalised medicine.

The focus area "Re-USE of Health Data for Medical Research" investigates methods to exploit the growing volume of clinical and health-related routine data (e.g. hospital databases, [health insurance](#) payments, etc.). This can lead to new insights into the co-morbidities of certain patient populations, the effectiveness of health-related interventions in the general population or the follow-up costs of prescribing medicines. See: [cemsiiis.meduniwien.ac.at/en](http://cemsiiis.meduniwien.ac.at/en)

**More information:** "Potential Savings in Prescription Drug Costs for Hypertension, Hyperlipidemia and Diabetes Mellitus by Equivalent Drug Substitution in Austria: A Nationwide Cohort Study." [DOI: 10.1007/s40258-014-0143-4](#)

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