Reviewer's report

Title: Impact of price regulation on the utilization of generic cardiovascular medicines: A hospital study in Chongqing, China

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In many countries much effort has been made to increase the consumption of generic drugs in order to stimulate price competition of pharmaceuticals. Generic substitution of prescription drugs is also used as a way to decrease medical costs in many countries world-wide. This manuscript aims to explore the market share of generic and branded drugs in one hospital in China. The author has also calculated potential savings from more consistent use of generic drugs.

The theme of the study is eternally topical, but not very original. Because the study has been carried out in China, it might be interesting for readers. Several deficiencies in the manuscript make the paper difficult to read and understand.

Background

The context of the study should be explained more detailed. The author writes about health care reform, but does not illustrate the existing health care system including pharmaceutical supply. In some of the references (16-18) these topics are explained, but the health care system should be shortly described also in this paper. The separation of drug prescription and dispensing (SPD) may also be unfamiliar to readers. It has been quite common in Asian countries that physicians and pharmacists are allowed to both prescribe and dispense drugs. The author writes: "In China, the separation of drug prescription and dispensing (SPD) has attracted much discussion, but no common agreement has been achieved." What does this mean? Can hospital pharmacies also sell drugs to public?

In the paper the researcher writes that current reimbursement system used in pharmaceutical expenditure in Chinese hospital includes doctors to overprescribe drugs to patients and to prescribe drugs that produce the greatest profit. Profit to whom?

The context needs also some figures about total drug costs in China, if these are available.

The aim of the study is hard to follow in the present form.

Method

The data was obtained from the magazine company of China Pharmacy. Could the author describe the source material more? How the drug utilization data is
collated from hospitals? The researcher used hospital’s procurement price in comparison. Is this also the price that the patient pays for an individual drug? How much are drug expenditures from the total budget of the study hospital?

Discussion

The discussion is a bit hard to understand, because of the lacking context of the study. The author has discussed about the limitations of the study (e.g. one region, one hospital, one indication) quite objectively.

Conclusions

I think that the conclusions are not based on the results of the study. The author writes: “For China’s comprehensive healthcare policy makers, the decline of drug prices alone couldn’t cut the pharmaceutical expenditures; on the contrary, it may exert a negative influence on the supply side and demand side of generic drugs.” This conclusion cannot be drawn based on this paper.

In conclusion, this manuscript is interesting, because China’s pharmaceutical policy has been unknown overseas. The manuscript is, however, difficult to follow because the context of the study is unclear. A scientific article should be autonomously readable. For me this study was very difficult to follow and I had to investigate some facts about China’s health care and pharmaceutical supply chain to understand the messages of the manuscript.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.