

# Global pill price ‘snapshot’ reveals large differences in the price of ciprofloxacin

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Amsterdam – On 30 November 2009 Health Action International (HAI) undertook a global “snapshot” of the price of ciprofloxacin, a commonly used off-patent antibiotic. Individuals from HAI’s extended network and partners visited private retail pharmacies to collect the price of the originator brand product and the lowest priced generic equivalent.

Data were collected from 93 countries, where the price for a 7 day treatment course of ciprofloxacin ranged between US\$0.42 and US\$131. An interactive map on HAI’s website presents the results and shows large price differentials across the world for this medicine (see [www.haiweb.org/medicineprices](http://www.haiweb.org/medicineprices)). While the prices should not be considered representative, as great price variation exists within some countries, these “snapshot” prices are indicative of what people have to pay, when paying the full retail price, in those pharmacies on that day.

The findings confirm that prices can vary widely both between countries and within countries. Although the patent on ciprofloxacin expired a number of years ago, the price difference between the lowest priced generic and the originator brand (the ‘brand premium’) is significant in many countries. For example, Colombia showed the largest brand premium, with the originator brand priced at 60 times the lowest priced generic. Colombia also had the highest treatment cost for originator brand ciprofloxacin in the private sector: a patient in Colombia pays more than 200 times the price they would pay in five Asian countries where the price of generics was lowest – a difference of almost 20,000%.

The average price of the originator brand shows very little variation across countries of different wealth. In contrast, the average price of generics decreased as the wealth of the country decreased.

The use of low priced generic medicines is a significant step towards improving access to treatment. Generic ciprofloxacin is mostly available at a much lower price than the originator brand product, and in many cases, there is ample room to reduce the generic price further, making treatment more affordable.

HAI believes governments need to further examine access to affordable essential medicines in their country and give it the priority it deserves. Being sick is enough of a misfortune; obtaining needed medicines should never result in choices between impoverishment, going without treatment or buying only a partial course of treatment.

Please refer to the HAI website to see the interactive map reporting the price data, and the analysis of results and recommendations: <http://www.haiweb.org/medicineprices>. For further information, contact Margaret Ewen at HAI Global (telephone +31 20 683 3684 or email [medicineprices@haiweb.org](mailto:medicineprices@haiweb.org)).

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