

## Important initiative in Pakistan to develop medicine pricing policy

On the instructions of the Prime Minister, Pakistan's Federal Ministry of Health has formed a Board to formulate medicine pricing policy. The aim of the Board is to develop an official policy on medicine pricing that is transparent, predictable and visionary, and meets the Government's objective of improving people's access to quality essential medicines at affordable prices, especially for the poor. The Board is chaired by the Federal Secretary of Health, and membership includes the Federal Director General of Health and high-level officials from the Ministries of Industry, and Commerce and Finance. Representatives of multinational pharmaceutical companies, the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturer's Association, and The Network for Consumer Protection are also members of the Board. The Cost Accountant of the Federal Ministry of Health is the secretary.

The Board invited Dr Zafar Mirza, Regional Adviser on Essential Medicines and Pharmaceutical Policies from WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office, to set the context for the Board's work on pricing policy, at its first meeting held on 14 November 2008 in Islamabad. The WHO Representative in Pakistan, Dr Khalif Bile Mohamud, also participated in the meeting.

In Dr Mirza's keynote presentation to the Board, he shared WHO's perspective on medicine prices and policies and presented key findings from 11 national medicine price surveys conducted in the region using the WHO/HAI survey methodology, including a survey conducted by The Network for Consumer Protection in Pakistan. Using data from this survey, he focused on the poor affordability of commonly used essential medicines in Pakistan, assessed using new approaches under developed by a WHO/HAI intern from the University of Rotterdam (catastrophic spending and impoverishment due to purchasing medicines). This drew much attention and discussion by Board members. In his presentation, Dr Mirza also outlined pricing policies in other countries in the region, and gave recommendations for the Board to consider.

In its future meetings, the Board will discuss these aspects further, seek advice from other stakeholders, and then draft and officially notify the new medicine pricing policy. An implementation stage will follow. It will be important to monitor prices, availability and affordability to assess the impact of the new policy in improving access to affordable treatments.

Click here to access the [presentation](#) and a [summary report of the Pakistan survey findings](#). Query the database to access all the results from the Pakistan survey.