

SAND abstract No. 133 from the BEACH program 2008–09

Subject: Generic medication substitution for general practice patients

Organisation supporting this study: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing

Issues: Decisions regarding use of generic medication substitution in Australian general practice patients; reasons for not allowing generic substitution; number of medications regularly taken by patients; generic substitution decision for medications prescribed at the current encounter.

Sample: 2,974 patients from 101 GPs; data collection period: 19/08/08 – 22/09/08.

Method: Detailed in the paper entitled 'SAND Method: 2008–09' available at: <www.fmrc.org.au/publications/SAND_abstracts.htm>.

Summary of results

The sex distribution of the patient sample (57.8% female) reflected that of all BEACH encounters. The age distribution differed from that of all BEACH encounters in 2007–08, with significantly fewer patients aged 25–44 years, 20.4% (95% CI:18.3–22.5) compared with 23.4% (95% CI: 22.7–24.1).

Of the 2,974 patients for whom details about generic medication substitution were provided, the vast majority (90.8%) were always allowed generic substitution, 4.2% were sometimes allowed substitution and for 5.0% substitution was never allowed. Patients aged 65 years and over were significantly less likely to be always allowed substitution (86.0%, 95% CI: 79.2–92.7) compared with patients aged 1–17 years (97.0%, 95% CI: 94.4–99.6).

Of the 273 patients who were not allowed or only sometimes allowed generic substitution, reasons for this decision were provided for 267 patients. Multiple responses were allowed and a total of 405 reasons were recorded. GP preference was the most commonly reported reason for restricting/not allowing generic substitution (59.9% of these patients, $n = 160$), and for 46.4% of these patients ($n = 124$) it was the sole reason for restricting/not allowing substitution. Patient-based factors were also common reasons for restricting/not allowing generic substitution and included use of multiple medications (21.7% of patients), patient age (17.2%), mental state (14.6%) and complex medication regimen (10.1%).

Of the 267 patients for whom generic substitution was restricted/not allowed, one-third were not taking any prescribed or over-the-counter medications on a regular or ongoing basis ($n = 86$), one-quarter were taking one to two medications ($n = 67$), 19.1% were taking three to four medications, and 23.6% were taking five or more medications.

GPs were asked to record the generic substitution status of medications prescribed at the current encounter. For 59.3% ($n = 162$) of the 273 patients for whom generic substitution was restricted/not allowed, at least one medication was prescribed at the encounter, and of these 162 encounters, generic medication substitution was not allowed for any medications at 68.5%, substitution was allowed for all medications at 20.4% and selected substitution was allowed at 11.1%.

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AIHW Australian GP Statistics and Classification Centre, 2009. SAND abstract No. 133 from the BEACH program: Generic medication substitution for general practice patients. Sydney: AGPSCC University of Sydney. ISSN 1444-9072

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

The shaded section of the following forms asks questions about **GENERIC MEDICATION SUBSTITUTION**.
 You may tear out this page as a guide to completing the following section of forms.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please answer the following questions for **ALL** of the **next 30 PATIENTS** in the order in which the patients are seen.

Please **DO NOT** select patients to suit the topic being investigated.

Generic substitution

Please use the tick boxes to advise whether you **allow generic substitution of prescribed medications** for this patient (regardless of whether you did or did not prescribe a medication today).

If you **always allow generic substitution** for this patient please **end the questions** here for this patient.

No / restricted generic substitution

If you **DO NOT ALLOW** or if you **RESTRICT generic substitution** for this patient, please use the tick boxes to indicate the **reason(s)** that you **do not allow or restrict generic substitution** for this patient.

Critical dose medications are defined as those where small differences in dose may lead to serious therapeutic failures and/or serious adverse drug reactions.*

Tick as many boxes as apply.

If the reason is not listed please tick 'other' and write the reason(s) in the space provided.

* Adapted from Health Canada. Guidance for industry, Bioequivalence requirements: critical dose drugs. Available from: www.hc-sc.gc.ca

Number of medications

Please advise the **number of prescribed medications and/or GP-advised over-the-counter (OTC) medications** (e.g. low dose aspirin for cardiovascular prevention, paracetamol for analgesic management of osteoarthritis), this patient takes on a daily or regular basis for ongoing management. (Please discuss with the patient if necessary.)

Do not include vitamins, minerals and other complementary medicines that you have not advised.

Medications prescribed today

For **medications prescribed at today's encounter** If substitution of generics is **NOT allowed** for:

- **Selected medications**—please write the names of medications for which generic substitution was NOT allowed
- **ALL medications**—please tick the box labelled 'all of today's meds'.

If **no prescriptions** were given at today's encounter please tick the box labelled '**no prescriptions today**'.

In general, do you allow generic substitution of prescribed medications for this patient?

- Yes - always → **End questions**
- Yes - sometimes
- No

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If you do not allow, or if you restrict, generic substitution for this patient what is / are the reason(s)?

- Patient's age (Tick all that apply)
- Patient's mental state
- Multiple medications
- Complexity of current regimen
- Critical dose medication(s) _____
- Avoidance of adverse events _____
- Allergy
- GP preference
- Other... *please specify* _____

How many prescribed and/or GP-advised OTC medications is this patient taking on a daily/regular ongoing basis?

- 0 5-8
- 1-2 9-12
- 3-4 >12

TODAY'S MEDICATION(S) for this patient:

Please write the names of medications **prescribed today** for which generic substitution was **NOT allowed**:

- No prescriptions today → **End questions**

All of today's meds

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____