



Corporate Press Release

Department of Health Announces a Public Consultation on Automatic Generic Substitution

DH proposal for compulsory switch to cheaper medicines fails to consider fully patient safety

London, 05 January 2010 – The Department of Health (DH) has published plans today proposing the possible introduction of Automatic Generic Substitution to allow pharmacists to dispense generic medicines, even if the prescribing doctor or nurse has written a prescription for a brand. This means compulsory switches for patients to cheaper medicines, in an effort to cut costs.

The DH has issued a public consultation on the proposals, open until 30th March, which is welcome news to many who have serious concerns about Automatic Generic Substitution, due to the potential harm to patient safety, the impact on the management of disease, together with unnecessary restrictions on prescribing freedom and choice for prescribers.

However, it seems the patient safety aspect has not been properly examined in the DH's consultation or the impact assessment. No formal assessment has been presented in the Consultation or the Impact Assessment, merely a set of optimistic assumptions that favour the DH's preferred strategy.

Norgine believes there has also been an underestimation of the costs the scheme favoured by the Department of Health will have on patients and prescribers. It is unclear what the exact cost will be, though it has been estimated to be in the region of £25m over a period of 4 years. Therefore it is difficult to predict whether it will bring about the estimated cost savings, especially considering the potential for additional treatment for side effects, loss of disease control and extra visits to the prescriber that may be needed. Stakeholders who were consulted prior to the development of the document raised doubts over whether Automatic Generic Substitution would achieve anything.

Norgine COO, Peter Martin, said: *"This consultation is welcomed not only by Norgine but also by many stakeholders who have petitioned the DH to go public on the proposal to ensure that the practical impact of generic substitution upon patients' outcomes, as well as safety, concordance and the NHS medicines' bill, is considered. We urge people to respond to the document to ensure the DH do not introduce their preferred strategy of restricting prescribing freedom at the potential cost of patients' safety and health."*

The consultation document and the reply forms can be found at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_110517

Please visit www.genericsubstitution.com for more information on Automatic Generic Substitution.

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Notes to editors:**Norgine**

Norgine is an independent, successful European specialty pharmaceutical company that has been established for over 100 years and has a direct presence in all the major European markets. Norgine employs over 1,000 people.

Norgine's focus is the development and marketing of pharmaceutical products that address significant unmet clinical needs in areas such as gastroenterology, hepatology and pain management. The company currently markets a range of products in its key therapeutic areas such as MOVICOL[®] for the treatment of constipation and faecal impaction, MOVIPREP[®] a new generation of bowel cleansing preparation and KLEAN-PREP[®] for bowel preparation prior to colonoscopy.

Norgine is active in research and development and currently has products in various stages of clinical development. Norgine manufactures most of its own products in Hengoed in Wales and Dreux in France.

Norgine's web site www.norgine.com