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PRESS RELEASE

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Prices of medication in Western Division is much higher: Survey

The Consumer Council of Fiji survey on medication prices in Fiji reveals that prices are much higher in the Western Division when compared to the Central Division and the Northern Division. In Northern Division the price variation is less which means there is limited competition. The Council's survey involved the use of a prescription of a pack of 7 medicines (*Amoxicillin, Enalapril, Simvastatin, Metformin, Fruesmide, Glipizide and Aspirin*) for an elderly male patient suffering from diabetes, cardiovascular ailments, high blood pressure and cholesterol.

While comparing the medication prices in all three Divisions including the Central/Eastern, Western and Northern Divisions, the Council found that in Western Division consumers were paying exorbitant price for the pack of 7 medications which was up to \$44.25. This amount was also the highest price paid nationally. The percentage difference between the highest and the lowest prices for the full complement of prescribed medicines in the Western Division was 229%. This means that a consumer who pays the highest price of \$44.25 for the prescribed medicine pack was paying 229% more than the one who pays the lowest price of \$13.45

Highest and Lowest Prices (Full Pack)

DIVISION	LOWEST PRICE	HIGHEST PRICE	% DIFFERENCE
All/National	\$13.45	\$44.25	229%
Central/Eastern	\$15.35	\$38.80	153%
Western	\$13.45	\$44.25	229%
Northern	\$21.80	\$25.50	17%

The Northern Division had the lowest price difference meaning consumers had little choice. In essence we can deduce that huge price gaps exists between the pharmacies (irrespective of originator brand or generics) and many consumers may be unaware of this gap and are buying medicines at exorbitant prices.

Even the comparison for all 7 medications on the prescription irrespective of generics and originator brand revealed that the Western Division had both the most expensive and the lowest priced pack. The most expensive pack was \$44.25 purchased at Hyperchem Pharmacy in Lautoka, while lowest priced pack was \$13.45 at Nadi Chemist. The highest price in the Central/Eastern area was \$38.80 recorded at Superdrug Pharmacy (Suva Central Bldg), while the lowest priced pack was sold by Guardian Angel Pharmacy (Vivarz Plaza, Laucala Beach) for \$15.35. In the Northern Division, there were not much price differences between the three pharmacies. The Northern Drug Store had the highest price of \$25.50, while Nasea Chemist had lowest at \$21.80.

A price analysis on the price difference for buying the same packs (6 generics and 1 originator brand) in 3 divisions in Fiji showed same medicines were sold at a higher price in Western

division as compared to Central and Northern division. Consumers have limited choice in pricing in the Northern division ie the lowest price was \$21.80 and the highest was \$25.50. In Labasa, consumer choice is restricted because there are only three pharmacies where two pharmacies have common ownership. The table below shows the divisional analysis of similar medication prices.

Divisional Analysis- Pharmacies with 6 generics and one originator brand (*Glipizide-Minidiab*)

	CENTRAL/EASTERN	WESTERN	NORTHERN
Lowest price	\$15.35	\$20.80	\$21.80
Highest price	\$29.85	\$ 31.00	\$25.50
Price difference between lowest and highest price	\$ 14.50	\$ 10.20	\$ 3.70
Percentage price difference between lowest and highest price	94%	49%	17%

Furthermore, a comparison made for those pharmacies selling 6 generic medications (*Amoxicillin, Enalapril, Simvastatin, Metformin, Fruesmide and Aspirin*) and 1 originator brand *Minidiab (Glipizide)* revealed that the highest price for these medicines was charged by Chovhan Pharmacy Lautoka at \$31.00, while Guardian Angel Pharmacy, Laucala Beach in Suva had the lowest price of \$15.35. The percentage price difference between the lowest and the highest for this group was 102% which means double price for the same set of medicine. A **consumer in Lautoka paid \$15.65 more** to buy the same set of medicines as compared to a consumer in Suva. How can a 102% price difference be justified?

Pharmacies with 6 generics and one originator brand (*Glipizide -Minidiab*)

Number of pharmacies compared	16
Highest Price (Chovhan Pharmacy Lautoka)	\$31.00
Lowest Price (Guardian Angel Pharmacy, Laucala Beach, Suva)	\$15.35
Price Difference between lowest and highest price	\$15.65
Percentage price difference between lowest and highest price	102%

Only 3 pharmacies dispensed all 7 generic medicines listed in the prescription. These were Midway Pharmacy, Ba; Health Care Chemist, Tavua and Nadi Chemist. Amongst the “All Generics Group”, the Health Care Chemist in Tavua charged a higher price of \$30.70 while Nadi Chemist charged \$13.45 for all generic medication. A consumer paid \$17.25 more for the same medicine. Interestingly, 36 pharmacies who sold either one or more branded medicine had a lower total pack price than Health Care Chemist in Tavua.



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Premila Kumar
Chief Executive Officer