

# Publication Summary



## Prescribing & Medicines: Generic Prescribing

Financial Years 1993/94 -2011/12

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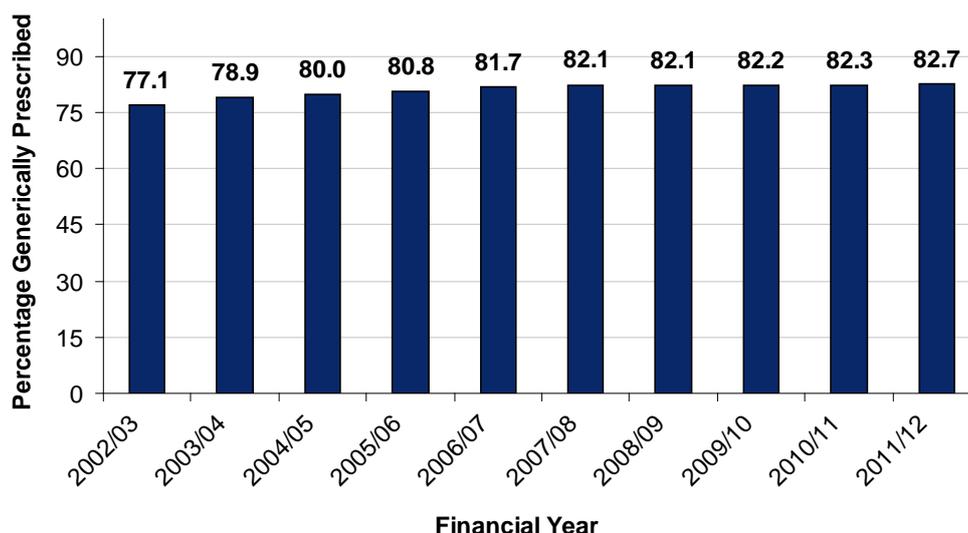
### About this Release

When the patent expires on a branded drug, the manufacturer loses exclusive rights to produce it. Generic drugs are non-branded versions produced by different manufacturers that produce equivalent clinical effects. Normally, the differences in formulation, and the small variation in the amount of drugs absorbed, make no difference clinically. For certain drugs, very small differences in bio-availability<sup>1</sup> can be important, e.g. anticonvulsants, lithium and theophylline. For these drugs the patient should always receive the version produced by a particular company, therefore the drug must be prescribed by brand name. Prescribers are strongly encouraged to write prescriptions generically. This is because generic drugs (those within the [Scottish Drug Tariff](#)) are generally cheaper than proprietary drugs. Best practice is another reason why; so that when generic substitutes have become available at a cost lower to the NHS than proprietary, the prescriber is already used to writing the generic name.

### Key Points

- The data shows an increase in generic prescribing from the years ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2003 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 (from 77.1% of prescribing to 82.7%).
- The percentage of generic prescribing has remained fairly constant at around 82% since 2007/08.
- NHS Shetland has the highest percentage of generic prescribing at 85.8%. NHS Lanarkshire is the lowest in the year 2011/12 at 80.5%. All NHS Boards other than NHS Lanarkshire have had a small increase in generic prescribing since 2010/11.

**Figure 1 - Generic Prescribing - Scotland, 2002/03 to 2011/12**



## Background

The introduction of automated payments through the ePharmacy programme in January 2011 resulted in changes to the data that ISD receives from PSD (Practitioner Services Division). This is because the availability of an electronic claim message from the pharmacy now allows PSD to record the actual item that has been dispensed. For items where there is no generic equivalent, this will be a branded product. Consequently, the previous reporting method no longer correctly reported on generic prescribing rates for these items. This affected, in particular, generic prescribing of branded products still under patent (often referred to as 'one-to-ones'). The increase in automation rates for these drugs came into effect from the early part of 2011.

A fix was applied in June 2012 to determine whether an item was written generically or as a brand; and this was applied retrospectively to data from January 2011 to November 2011.

For more information on the change to processing see:

[http://www.prismweb.scot.nhs.uk/old\\_news/np\\_old\\_news\\_201208.htm](http://www.prismweb.scot.nhs.uk/old_news/np_old_news_201208.htm)

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## Further Information

Further information can be found in the [Data Tables](#) or on the [ISD website](#)

<sup>1</sup> - The bio-availability of a drug is the fraction of the dose administered which reaches the systemic circulation. It is influenced by the physical properties of the drug such as solubility, particle size, the formulation (tablets, capsules, size, enteric coatings etc.) and by the gut environment, i.e. presence of other drugs, temperature, gut transit time etc.

### **About ISD**

Scotland has some of the best health service data in the world combining high quality, consistency, national coverage and the ability to link data to allow patient based analysis and follow up.

Information Services Division (ISD) is a business operating unit of NHS National Services Scotland - and has been in existence for over 40 years. We are an essential support service to NHSScotland and the Scottish Government Health Department and others, responsive to the needs of NHSScotland as the delivery of health and social care evolves.

### **Official Statistics**

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of 'Official Statistics'. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Code of Practice is produced and monitored by the UK Statistics Authority which is independent of Government. Under the Code of Practice, the format, content and timing of statistics publications are the responsibility of professional staff working within ISD.

Further information on ISD's statistics, including compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and on the UK Statistics Authority, is available on the [ISD website](http://www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/About-Our-Statistics/) [www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/About-Our-Statistics/](http://www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/About-Our-Statistics/)