

The provision of affordable access to essential drugs in developing countries

Still more than one third of the world's population lacks access to essential drugs. Nearly all live in less economically developed countries (LEDCs). To take measures for a better distribution of medication within such countries, governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), inter-governmental organisations (IGOs), companies and other private institution, especially those playing a role in the pharmaceutical sector, need to work closely together to build an affordable health system for everyone.

In order to achieve medication access to a larger amount, you can take relevant institutions into consideration as well as their responsibilities and influences. There is the need to increase not only the financing of new medication facilities, but also the moral aspect of medical inequality. How can it be verified that in most parts of the western world we have so many drugs, we even misuse or waste them, while in other parts of the world people die because they are not able to finance them? Not only the government can increase this awareness in modern societies, especially pharmaceutical companies can contribute much more to equality.

Companies, which produce or research new drugs, can influence the market through price regulations, competitive products, moral prestige or framework with international health organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) or Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). If the awareness in the publicity is there, the company's reputation will suffer and can cause further value loss if they do not help to decrease that problem.

As the prices are the main reasons why many people are not able to bring the medication up which they need inevitably, you have to pay close attention to this component. Measures to eliminate pricing might be an increase in competition, differential-pricing categories of drugs dependent on the country, TRIPS-safeguards, the installation of local production institutions or higher demand in such regions.

More competition leads to lower prices as more products are offered. Monopolies do not exist, which means clients have the choice.

The concept of differential-pricing categories bases on voluntary. Companies should consider the lower prices for lower-income markets. Unfortunately, this measures includes many weaknesses and it does not ensure long-term sustainability or independency. Furthermore, it has many risks for the companies itself, as the reduced drugs sold in LEDCs might get back illegally into MEDCs. In order to guarantee a differential pricing system, strict and global regulations are obligatory. But there have been successful examples of this measure in history, which shows that categorised can work particularly in emergencies.

Another optional improvement for LEDCs is provided through donations. Donations are often effective in emergencies where fast actions and a large amount of money are essential. However, they do not eliminate the problem in general as continuous supply is not guaranteed.

TRIPS means the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights established by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). It should provide the protection of innovation or invention of the producer in order to maximise economic and social wealth. The TRIPS-agreement therefore limits competition of further production options by giving patents on new discovered drugs for a period of at least 20 years. Monopoly cannot be avoided and prices increase. Cheaper alternatives to brand medication are in a way prohibited. To break this cycle, the regulations made by the WTO must become flexible and differential.

Independency and autonomy from other nations secures sustainability. In order to build up regional production facilities, you can focus on inducements for investors. Furthermore, this would lead to additional advantages such as employment.

Another factor leading to lower prices is higher demand, which is followed by a higher volume of orders.

More research, development and innovation in the medical sector affect LEDCs as well. This is mainly important in areas where malaria, HIV / AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases spread mostly, which is in low-income countries such as Africa, South Asia and Latin America. Medication must advance and disease eradication programmes must increase in order to prevent contribution.

As poverty is the main reason for not enough medical provision, the financial aspect of the provision of affordable access to essential drugs in developing countries remains the most important one. On the other hand the development of new drugs for diseases spread in LEDCs must grow as well to ensure safe, sustainable and effective supply.

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2005/april/tradoc_122270.pdf

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/pharm-framework.pdf>

<http://www.udo-schuklenk.org/files/access.htm>

www.wto.org/english/tratop_E/trips_e/hosbjor...e/15thoen_e.doc

<http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/en/d/Jh2951e/2.1.html>