Generics: just who can be trusted?

Generics can represent an important source of savings for national healthcare systems, without undermining quality of care.

It’s also worth remembering that patients are not cured by brands but rather by active ingredients prepared and packaged in an appropriate form. It does not matter whether a drug is a generic or an original brand, provided it meets the same quality standards. And when several medicines are equivalent, it makes sense to choose the least expensive.

It is up to physicians and pharmacists to choose the medicine, generic or original brand, that is best suited to each patient, taking into account the individual’s condition, age, lifestyle and the risk of errors. Prescriptions should be written using the international nonproprietary name (INN), and the dosage form, packaging, and flavour should be taken into account.

It is essential to discuss each phase of treatment with the patient, family members or carers in order to identify and understand specific expectations or concerns and to deal with questions and reservations. Finally, whenever possible, the same medicine, whether it is an original brand or a generic, should be used throughout a given course of treatment.