

Lipitor Goes Generic

July 6, 2010

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the cost benefits of using generic drugs and to inform you of an important generic drug that is now available.

Lipitor® (atorvastatin) appears near the top of all of our drug utilization lists. It is the world's top-selling drug and in 2009 Canadian sales totaled more than \$1 billion.

Lipitor is a cholesterol-fighting drug developed and marketed by Pfizer. Lipitor is indicated for lowering cholesterol and to prevent heart attacks and stroke in patients who are at high risk of experiencing these events. In general, most patients who receive this medication are over the age of 40, as this is the patient population at highest risk of cardiovascular disease and high cholesterol. With the recent introduction of a generic atorvastatin, plan sponsors can expect substantial savings in drug costs once provinces deem it interchangeable with the brand.

With the recent drug reform changes in Ontario, generic Lipitor has been deemed interchangeable and will be priced at 25 per cent of the brand price effective June 18th for the public sector, and at 50 per cent of the brand price for the private sector with further reductions over the next two years.

Apotex Inc. and Teva Canada Ltd., two generic manufacturers, recently announced that their version of Lipitor will be priced at 50 per cent of the brand name drug nationally.

In addition to Ontario, Prince Edward Island has deemed generic atorvastatin interchangeable with Lipitor. In Prince Edward Island it will be priced at 52.5 per cent of the brand, this came into effect on July 1, 2010.

Other provinces are evaluating the interchangeability of generic atorvastatin and we are awaiting their decisions. We will keep you updated as more information becomes available.

Plan sponsors should take the time to communicate this important change to its employees and to encourage everyone to use the genericized version of Lipitor as it will provide substantial cost relief to many benefit plans.