

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendations are listed below:

- Licensing authorities and regulatory agencies should exercise more control over the naming of a new formulation.
- Non-proprietary and new proprietary names should be internationalised.
- All formulations that are manufactured and marketed in particular must be recorded under regulatory authorities for that particular state.
- All formulations that are manufactured and marketed in Indian market must be recorded under the one central regulatory body which governs all the states.
- Pharmaceutical regulatory processes should be streamlined and improved.
- Over the counter (OTC) drugs should be given unique names.
- Non-proprietary names should be used as far as possible in prescriptions.
- Regulatory authorities should be willing to change the names if cross occurs.
- There should be good communication among those who prescribe, supply and administer medicines and those who take them.

Most of these recommendations seem quite proposed and remote and may take time before they are actually put into practice and thereby implemented. Therefore, considering the Indian scene, we propose a few simple and immediate steps to prevent brand name confusion:

1. The practitioner: Doctors should be well-versed with pharmacological (generic) names and the brand names that are available in their local setting. We should try to write drugs in legible handwriting. Although legibility is something impossible for most of us, a tip can be very helpful. Every time we have to write a prescription, we must make sure to write clearly, paying due attention to the spellings. It could be even more appropriate to write the generic names below the brand names in parentheses to avoid any confusion. Abbreviations should be strictly avoided. The doses should be mentioned without fail, as this would settle the conflict most of the time. We should also avoid giving prescriptions over the phone. In case it is the need of the hour, the drug name should be clearly spelt out and the patient should be asked to repeat it for confirmation. Finally, if we feel that two

drugs have confusing brand names then it should be reported to the medical representatives of the companies involved and they should be asked to consider revising their product names.

2. The dispenser/pharmacist: The pharmacists should be wholly convinced about the nature of the brand they are dispensing. If there is any doubt about the name, they should not hesitate to consult the prescribing doctor before dispensing. It is always desirable for the pharmacist to have knowledge of the doses of commonly used drugs. It is observed that many times they dispense the brands available at their shop rather than what is written in the prescription. This practice should stop.

3. The patient: A literate patient can himself check if the dispensed product is exactly the same as per the doctor's prescription. He should bring to the notice of the pharmacist in case of any doubt and refuse to accept any variations being handed over. Illiterate patients should make it a habit to verify the dispensed drug with the doctor or any literate person at home or in the neighbourhood..

4. The manufacturer: Now is the time when the manufacturing companies should also join hands in the battle against this common enemy. They should do a thorough check about the available brand names before naming their product. Any reports of confusing brand names should be taken seriously and renaming their product should be considered.

5. Drug Regulators: As already mentioned the licensing authority to grant a brand name to any particular composition is the state FDA in India. To eliminate the possibility of sound-alike and look- alike (SALA) brand names and misbranding of various drugs being sold in market, FDA must create an online pharmaceutical brand directory not only for their state but for brands being manufactured in other states, so that detection is instant and accurate. Such electronic directory must be regularly updated and made available to public too. To initiate such important measure, state FDA in collaboration with Central CDSCO office must draft guidelines for granting the brand name to any pharma product to avoid SALA brand names and misbranding in the first place.