ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Comparison of prices of commonly used drugs in AMRIT pharmacy, Jan Aushadhi Centre and Private chemist shop: An analytical study from a tertiary care centre in Haryana

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[Abstract](#)	[Introduction](#)	[Methodology](#)	[Results](#)	[Conclusion](#)	[References](#)	[Citation](#)	[Tables](#) / [Figures](#)

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Citation

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Abstract

Background: The price of medicine in India has always been a point of discussion in public domain. The price range of the same drug is very large with more than 100% difference between various brands available in different settings. **Aims and Objectives:** To assess the price of different drugs at Jan Aushasdhi (JA), AMRIT and Private Chemist and to compare the prices of these three outlets so that the issues. **Material and Methods**: This institution-based cross-sectional study was carried out from May 2019 to June 2019. A pretested proforma was prepared to compare the prices of 284 different medicines in Jan Aushadhi, AMRIT and private chemist shops. The collected data were entered in an Excel spreadsheet and presented in Proportions, percentages, and mean. **Results**: The price of 284 medicines were compared from JA (Median(IQR)- 15.18(18.75) INR) and Private chemist shop (Median(IQR)-88(111.5) INR) while 249 medicine from AMRIT (Median(IQR)-61.05(78.33) INR). Although the majority of the AMRIT drugs are cheaper than the chemist shop except for 31% of Antipsychotic drugs, 26.6% of antihypertensives, 25% of respiratory drugs, 25% of steroids, 21.9% of antibiotics. **Conclusion**: We concluded that JA is providing drugs cheaper than AMRIT and Private chemist . The prices of medicines offered at AMRIT are lower than market pricing but they are costlier when compared to JA prices.

Keywords

Introduction

The cost of drugs has been an important factor in the overall expenditure of treatment. The overall number of different medicines available in government hospitals are less as compared to the prescription requirements by doctors.(1) The price range of the same drug is very large with more than 100% difference between various brands. To address the issue of drug pricing, the government of India in 2008 initiated the concept of promotion of generic medicines via Jan Aushadhi (JA) scheme. Later, this was renamed as 'Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan aushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) (2, 3)

Along the similar lines, AMRIT (Affordable Medicine and Reliable Implants for Treatment) pharmacy outlets were opened to provide implants and other medicines for routine ailments like cancer, Diabetes etc at very economical prices.(4,5)

It has been claimed that Medicines available at the JA centers are 50-90 percent cheaper than branded drugs.(6) However, not all JA prices are lower than branded medicines. For example, the cheapest branded Cefuroxime Axetil in private chemist shop is almost three

times cheaper than its JA price.(7) Overall, very few studies have been done for comparative analysis of the prices of drugs in Jan Aushadhi, AMRIT, and private shops. Thus, the current study compared the prices of some of the commonly used medicines at these three centres.

Aims & Objectives

1. To assess the price of different drugs at Jan Aushasdhi, AMRIT and Private Chemist.
2. To compare the prices of these three outlets so that the issues with the price difference could be substantiate with scientific proof.

Material & Methods

Study area: This study was conducted at Kalpana Chawla Govt Medical College, Karnal (HR).

Study Population: Not Applicable

Study Period: This study was conducted from May 2019 to June 2019.

Study Type/ Design: It was an institutional-based descriptive, Cross-sectional, non-interventional study.

Study Size and Sample: To conduct this study, a total of commonly prescribed 284 medicines were compared for their prices.

Study Tools and Techniques: A pretested proforma was prepared to compare the prices of different medicines in Jan Aushadhi, AMRIT, and Private Chemist shop. Those medicines which were not available at Jan Aushadhi or AMRIT either were dropped off or their price ascertained from the central database of these two pharmacies. If the same brand of medicine which is available at AMRIT is not available in a private chemist shop, then the average price of the two most sold brands was considered. The study in no way will guide the treatment and investigative decisions for the patient in any OPD or IPD.

Inclusion Criteria: Most prescribed medicines in routine OPD and IPD in various departments were considered only.

Exclusion Criteria: Those drugs which are seldom prescribed or those drugs which come under the monopoly of any company were not included.

Statistical Analysis:The data collected was entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Proportions, percentages, mean and median with inter quartile range (IQR) were applied to analyze the data to identify important relationships between variables and determine the level of significance. $P<0.05$ was considered as significant if any.

Operational definition: The cheaper rate is defined as the low cost as compared to the counterpart.

Results

To know the cost of medicine and discount provided to the patients, a cost analysis was done between the various groups of medicines available at JA pharma, AMRIT pharmacy, and a local chemist shop. The JA Pharma medicines cover a wide range of GIT, Antipsychotics, analgesic, antidiabetics, antihypertensive drugs.

The price of 284 medicines were analysed from Jan Aushadhi (Median(IQR)- 15.18(18.75) INR) and Private chemist shop (Median(IQR)-88(111.5) INR) while 249 medicine from Amrit Pharmacy (Median(IQR)-61.05(78.33) INR). The Median(IQR) average discount (in percentage) provided by Jan Aushadhi was 10.71(0) INR, the private chemist shop provides 5.56(4.2) INR while the average discount provided by Amrit Pharmacy was 22.7(26.9) INR.

In the group of GIT drugs, 25 drugs were recorded from JA pharma (price range 3.57-65.86, Median(IQR)= 13.39(24.11) INR) and Chemist shop (price range 10-305, Median(IQR)= 83(106.5)INR, while 22 drugs (price range 22-163.76 INR, Median(IQR)= 35(58.8) INR) from AMRIT pharmacy. The Median(IQR) discount on the price provided by these pharmacies was as follows: JA pharma-10.71(0) INR (range- 0.00-11.76), Chemist shop-7.7(3.5) INR (range-0.00-16.67) and AMRIT Pharmacy- 7.78(3.5) INR (range- 6.05- 73.99). All drugs available in JA pharma are cheaper than in the AMRIT pharmacy and chemist shop. Although the majority of the Amrit pharmacy drugs are cheaper than the chemist shop except three (13.63%) out of 22 drugs. (Table-1)

In the group of Steroids drugs, 04 drugs were recorded from JA pharma (price range 5.36-106 INR, Median(IQR)= 15.18(76.82)INR), Chemist shop (price range 18-270 INR, Median(IQR)=44(192) INR and (price range17.69-271.66 INR, Median(IQR)= 31.87(192) INR) from AMRIT pharmacy. The Median(IQR) discount on the price provided by these pharmacies was as follows: JA pharma-10.72(0)(range- 10.71-10.92 INR), Chemist shop- 7.83(5.9) INR (range-7.09-10), and AMRIT Pharmacy- 9.2(16.5) INR (range- 1.93- 21.88). All drugs available in JA pharma are cheaper than in the AMRIT pharmacy and chemist shop. Although the majority of the Amrit pharmacy drugs are cheaper than the chemist shop except one (25%) out of four drugs. (Table-1)

In the group of drugs for anaemia, three drugs were recorded from JA pharma (price range 3.57-28 INR, Median(IQR)=15.1(76.8) INR), Chemist shop (price range 58-112, Median(IQR)=107(54) INR) and (price range 11.64-111.67 INR, Median(IQR)=34(100) INR) from AMRIT pharmacy. The Median(IQR) discount on the price provided by these pharmacies was as follows: JA pharma-10.71(1.04) INR (range- 9.68-10.72 INR), Chemist shop-6.3(2.76) INR (range-5.08-7.84) and AMRIT Pharmacy-22.4(59.8) INR (range- 13.77-73.64 INR). All drugs available in JA pharma are cheaper than those in the AMRIT pharmacy and chemist shop, and all the AMRIT pharmacy drugs are cheaper than the chemist. (Table-1)

In the group of Antipsychotic drugs, 32 drugs were recorded from JA pharma (price range 3.57-60.71 INR, Median(IQR)= 12.5(14.5) INR) and Chemist shop (price range 8-233, Median(IQR)=81(89.7) INR) while 29 (price range 18-219.21 INR, Median(IQR)= 62.1(83.9) INR) from AMRIT pharmacy. The Median(IQR) discount on the price

provided by these pharmacies was as follows: JA pharma- 10.71(0) INR (range- 10.00-10.72), Chemist shop- 6.25(3.3) INR (range-0.00-12.28 INR) and AMRIT Pharmacy- 6.8(11.7) INR (range- 6.02-53.43 INR). All drugs available in JA pharma are cheaper than in the AMRIT pharmacy and chemist shop. Although the majority of the Amrit pharmacy drugs are cheaper than the chemist shop except nine (31%) out of 29 drugs. (Table-2)

In the group of Analgesic drugs, 34 drugs were recorded from JA pharma (price range 4.02-70.48 INR, Median(IQR)= 11.8(11.5) INR) and Chemist shop (price range 8-288 INR, Median(IQR)=67.5(84.7)INR) while 29 (price range 11.48-161.36 INR, Median(IQR)= 30.5(39.4) INR) from AMRIT pharmacy. The Median(IQR) discount on the price provided by these pharmacies was as follows: JA pharma- 10.7(0) INR (range- 4.76-16.67 INR), Chemist shop- 5.5(3.6) INR (range-2.22-21.52 INR) and AMRIT Pharmacy- 23.2(47.6) INR (range- 4.76-16.67 INR). All drugs available in JA pharma are cheaper than in the AMRIT pharmacy and chemist shop. Although the majority of the Amrit pharmacy drugs are cheaper than the chemist shop, except five (17.2%) out of 29 drugs. (Table-2)

In the group of antibiotics, 41 drugs were recorded from JA pharma (price range 4-191.07 INR, Median(IQR)= 25.89(31.6) INR) and Chemist shop (price range 19-629 INR, Median(IQR)=84(103) INR) while 32 (price range 9.9-451 INR, Median(IQR)= 74.9(92.8) from AMRIT pharmacy. The Median(IQR) discount on the price provided by these pharmacies was as follows: JA pharma- 10.7(0) (range- 4-20), Chemist shop- 5.2(3.6) INR (range-2.33-18.98 INR), and AMRIT Pharmacy- 24.6(27.4) INR (range- 2.40-66.85 INR). All drugs available in JA pharma are cheaper than in the AMRIT pharmacy and chemist shop. Although the majority of the Amrit pharmacy drugs are cheaper than the chemist shop except seven (21.9%) out of 32 drugs. (Table-2)

In a group of Anti Diabetic drugs, 24 drugs were recorded from JA pharma (price range 3.57-269, Median(IQR)= 12.9(18.9) INR) and Chemist shop (price range 30-980, Median(IQR)=82.5(73.5) INR) while 21 (price range 11.72-832.65 INR, Median(IQR)= 65.8(65.9) INR) from AMRIT pharmacy. The Median(IQR) discount on the price provided by these pharmacies was as follows: JA pharma- 10.7(0) INR (range- 4.61-10.72 INR), Chemist shop- 4.7(2.4) INR (range-0.91-11.11 INR) and AMRIT Pharmacy- 27.7(18.9) INR (range- 9.65-61.05 INR). All drugs available in JA pharma are cheaper than those in the AMRIT pharmacy and chemist shop. Although the majority of the Amrit pharmacy drugs are cheaper than the chemist shop, except for three (14.3%) out of 21 drugs. (Table-3)

In the group of Anti-Hypertensive drugs, 67 drugs were recorded from JA pharma (price range 1.79-61 INR, Median(IQR)= 13(12.5) INR) and Chemist shop (price range 4.0-415, Median(IQR)SD=102(133) INR) while 64 (price range 4.57- 336.63 INR, Median(IQR)SD= 66.64(68.3) INR) from AMRIT pharmacy. The Median(IQR)

discount on the price provided by these pharmacies was as follows: JA pharma- 10.7(0) INR (range- 7.14-12.50 INR), Chemist shop- 5.2(5.5)(range-0.92-17.70 INR) and AMRIT Pharmacy- 21.9(16.8) INR (range- 3.41-83.75 INR). All drugs available in JA pharma are cheaper than those in the AMRIT pharmacy and chemist shop. Although the majority of the Amrit pharmacy drugs are cheaper than the chemist shop, only 17 (26.6%) out of 64 drugs. (Table-3)

In the group of Eye/ENT drugs, six drugs were recorded from JA pharma (price range 3.57-38.39, Median(IQR)= 14.7(29) INR), Chemist shop (price range 35-329, Median(IQR)=82.5(135.7) and (price range 14.68-477.22 INR, Median(IQR)= 35.1(164) INR) from AMRIT pharmacy. The Median(IQR) discount on the price provided by these pharmacies was as follows: JA pharma- 10.7(0) (range- 10.00-10.72 INR), Chemist shop- 6.2(4.3) INR (range-2.26-11.62 INR) and AMRIT Pharmacy- 44.2(23.7) INR (range- 11.83-71.55 INR). All drugs available in JA pharma are cheaper than in the AMRIT pharmacy and chemist shop. Although the majority of the Amrit pharmacy drugs are cheaper than the chemist shop, except one (16.6%) out of six drugs. (Table-3)

In the group of respiratory drugs, 10 drugs were recorded from JA pharma (price range 1.79-117.86 INR, Median(IQR)= 17.4(40.1)INR) and Chemist Shop (price range 51-245 INR, Median(IQR)=148.5(89.25) INR) while eight (price range 8.92-184.3 INR, Median(IQR)= 91.3(130.3) INR) from AMRIT pharmacy. The Median(IQR) discount on the price provided by these pharmacies was as follows: JA pharma- 10.71(0) INR (range- 10.71-10.72 INR), Chemist shop- 5.1(2.2) INR (range-1.71-10.53 INR) and AMRIT Pharmacy- 22.9(4.7) INR (range- 0.86-48.52 INR). All drugs available in JA pharma are cheaper than in the AMRIT pharmacy and chemist shop. Although the majority of the Amrit pharmacy drugs are cheaper than the chemist shop except two (25%) out of eight drugs. (Table-3)

Discussion

The unprecedented scope of the SDGs presents a great opportunity to put health at the centre of economic growth, with the promise of "leaving no one behind." SDG-3's clear target of universal health coverage (UHC) can anchor, lead, and enlighten SDG aspirations in health.(8)The two basic components of UHC are population coverage with quality, essential health services, and population coverage with financial protection. (9) Many people wind up paying for healthcare out of their own pockets since they don't have access to free or low-cost therapy. Desperation leads to impulsive and hasty measures, such as borrowing money or selling property and assets, which pushes people farther into indebtedness.(8)

This research was carried out to evaluate the cost of medicine borne by patients in various settings, such as Jan SawashtyaAushadhi, Amrit Pharmacy, and Private

Pharmacy. The price of 284 medicines were analyzed from Jan Aushadhi (Median(IQR)- 15.18(18.75) INR) and Private chemist shop (Median(IQR)-88(111.5) INR) while 249 medicine from Amrit Pharmacy (Median(IQR)- 61.05(78.33) INR). We found that the cost of medicines available in Jan Aushadhi center is much lower than branded medicines available at Amrit and private chemist pharmacy. Similar findings were observed by the K. Mukhrjee (10)and T. George (11)who found that JAS price is among the lowest in the market except one (methotrexate). A study by M. Pichholiya (12)found that the mean cost of 52% of generic medicines of the selected 50 medicines was higher than their branded versions, the mean cost of 40% of branded medicines was higher than generic ones, and the cost of 8% of medicines was approximately the same. Contrary to this, we found that generic medicine were observed to be cheaper than the branded medicines available from the Amrit and private chemist shops.

The Median (IQR) discount (in percentage) provided by Jan Aushadhi was 10.71(0) INR, the private chemist shop provides 5.56(4.2) INR while the average discount provided by Amrit Pharmacy was 22.7(26.9) INR. Although the majority of the Amrit pharmacy drugs are cheaper than those the chemist shop except for 31% of Antipsychotic drugs, 26.6% of antihypertensive drugs, 25% of respiratory drugs, 25% of steroid drugs, 21.9% of antibiotics, 17.2% of analgesic, 16.6% of Eye/ENT drugs, 14.3% of anti-diabetic, 13.63% of GIT drugs.

Although Amrit Pharmacy was set to operate in the same location as of Jan Aushadhi Center, it was a positive step in the right direction, with promises to supply cancer and chronic illness medicine at a lower cost than the market. The prices of medicines offered at Amrit pharmacy are excessively high when compared to JSA prices. It has an impact on the total treatment cost. It was shown that pharmacies account for 43% of the top five out-of-pocket expenses, which is why existing pricing structures for vital drugs should be updated and made more cost-effective.

Conclusion

Our study compares Jan Aushadhi medications to the majority of drugs available at Amrit and private pharmacy shops. We came to the conclusion that Jan Aushadhi Centre offers pharmaceuticals at a lower cost than Amrit Pharmacy and a private chemist shop. Although the prices of medicines given at Amrit pharmacy are lower than market prices, they are costlier when compared to Jan Aushadhi Centre rates. This increases the impact on the total treatment cost. From a social aspect, drug cost reductions will boost affordability, prescription compliance, and indeed the patient's financial strain.

Recommendation

The rate of medicines / drugs at AMRIT centres should be made more economical than the current prices at par with Jan Aushandhi centres. More and more Jan Aushadhi

centres should be opened down to small cities and should be easily available for the masses as this will lead to more affordable medicines to the people.

Limitation of the study

Not all the medicines available at Jan Asushadhi centre were included in the study. Also only few routinely sold brands by private chemist were taken into consideration and not all the available multiple brands for the same medicine/ drug were used for price comparison.

Relevance of the study

The study was conducted to know the comparison of prices of medicines as it is generally claimed by the government and also generally assumed that the price of medicines available at Jan Aushadhi are less as compared to AMRIT and private pharmacies as claimed. The study substantiate the claim that most of the medicines are available cheaper at Jan Aushadhi centres and the study provides the range of cost of medicines at all the three different pharmacy centres.

Authors Contribution

All the author were involved in the study conduction and manuscript submission and has contributed significantly. RG is the principal investigator in this study and AS, Sg, KK were Co-PI in the original plan which submitted to the IEC and all authors were involved at every step of the conduction of study. KS provided guidance while collecting data and intellectual input in the manuscript writing and its preparation, data compilation and analysis, proof reading and helped in submission. Later on also he was involved in editing the manuscript as per editor's instructions. Anirrudh was instrumental during writing this manuscript, cross check the data, analysis of data and final draft and submission of manuscript.

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Tables

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF DRUGS AMONG JA PHARMA, AMRIT, AND CHEMIST.

Comparison of GIT drugs	JA Pharma N=25	Chemist N=25	Amrit N=22
Original Price Range	4-73.76	12-317	24.16-279
Median(IQR)	15(27)	90(112.73)	85.2(99.5)
After discount Price Range	3.57-65.86	10-305	22-163.76
Median(IQR)	13.39(24.11)	83(106.5)	35(58.8)
Discount Range	0.00-11.76	0.00-16.67	6.05-73.99
Median(IQR)	10.71(0)	7.7(3.5)	7.78(3.5)
Comparison of steroid drugs	**JA Pharma N=4**	**Chemist N=4**	**Amrit N=4**
Original Price Range	6-119	20-277	36.7-277
Median(IQR)	17(86.25)	47.7(196.2)	38.35(194.4)
After discount Price Range	5.36-106	18-270	17.69-271.66
Median(IQR)	15.18(76.82)	44(192)	31.87(192)
Discount Range	10.71-10.92	7.09-10	1.93-21.88
Median(IQR)	10.72(0)	7.83(5.9)	9.2(16.5)
Comparison of drugs for Anaemia	**JA Pharma N=3**	**Chemist N=3**	**Amrit N=3**
Original Price Range	4-31	61.9-118	15-129.5
Median(IQR)	12(27)	116.1(56.1)	38.3(194.4)
After discount Price Range	3.57-28	58-112	11.64-111.67
Median(IQR)	15.1(76.8)	107(54)	34(100)
Discount Range	9.68-10.72	5.08-7.84	13.77-73.64
Median(IQR)	10.71(1.04)	6.3(2.76)	22.4(59.8)

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF DRUGS AMONG JA PHARMA, AMRIT AND CHEMIST.

Comparison of Antipsychotic drugs	JA PharmaN=32	ChemistN=32	AmritN=29
Original Price Range	4-68	8.7-250	22.50-250
Median(IQR)	14(16.2)	84.2(92.5)	76(94.7)
After discount Price Range	3.57-60.71	8-233	18-219.21
Median(IQR)	12.5(14.5)	81(89.7)	62.1(83.9)
Discount Range	10.00-10.72	0.00-12.28	6.02-53.43
Median(IQR)	10.71(0)	6.25(3.3)	6.8(11.7)
Comparison of Analgesic drugs	**JA Pharma N=34**	**Chemist N=34**	**Amrit N=29**
Original Price Range	4.5-74	9.8-301.5	14.95-178.46
Median(IQR)	13(12.5)	71.5(87.2)	78.5(88.8)
After discount Price Range	4.02-70.48	8-288	11.48-161.36
Median(IQR)	11.8(11.5)	67.5(84.7)	30.5(39.4)
Discount Range	4.76-16.67	2.22-21.52	0.27-84.15
Median(IQR)	10.71(0)	5.5(3.6)	23.2(47.6)
Comparison of Antibiotics	**JA Pharma N=41**	**Chemist N=41**	**Amrit N=32**
Original Price Range	5-214	21-646	14-590
Median(IQR)	29(35.5)	87.7(104.8)	100.4(122.6)
After discount Price Range	4-191.07	19-629	9.9-451
Median(IQR)	25.89(31.6)	84(103)	74.9(92.8)
Discount Range	4-20	2.33-18.98	2.40-66.85
Median(IQR)	10.7(0)	5.2(3.6)	24.6(27.4)

TABLE 3: COMPARISON OF DRUGS AMONG JA PHARMA, AMRIT AND CHEMIST.

Comparison of Anti Diabetic drugs	JA PharmaN=24	ChemistN=24	AmritN=21
Original Price Range	4-282	32.85-989	16.91-1099.11
Median(IQR)	14.5(19.7)	86.4(73.4)	89.5(88.6)
After discount Price Range	3.57-269	30-980	11.72-832.65
Median(IQR)	12.9(18.9)	82.5(73.5)	65.8(65.9)
Discount Range	4.61-10.72	0.91-11.11	9.65-61.05
Median(IQR)	10.71(0)	4.7(2.4)	27.7(18.9)
Comparison of Anti-Hypertensive drugs	JA PharmaN=67	ChemistN=67	AmritN=64
Original Price Range	2-68	4.86-423.54	4.86-438-9
Median(IQR)	14(13.5)	113.8(130.3)	104(94.1)
After discount Price Range	1.79-61	4-415	4.57- 336.63
Median(IQR)	13(12.5)	102(133)	66.64(68.3)
Discount Range	7.14-12.50	0.92-17.70	3.41-83.75
Median(IQR)	10.7(0)	5.2(5.5)	21.9(16.8)
Comparison of Eye/ENT drugs	JA PharmaN=6	ChemistN=6	AmritN=6
Original Price Range	4-43	39.6-336.6	16.65-596.53
Median(IQR)	16.5(25.2)	86.5(85.5)	98(110.6)
After discount Price Range	3.57-38.39	35-329	14.68-477.22
Median(IQR)	14.7(29)	82.5(135.7)	35.1(164)
Discount Range	10.00-10.72	2.26-11.62	11.83-71.55
Median(IQR)	10.71(0)	6.2(4.3)	44.2(23.7)
Comparison of Respiratory drugs	JA PharmaN=10	ChemistN=10	AmritN=8
Original Price Range	2-132	57-253.74	11.64-239.25
Median(IQR)	19.5(33)	5.18(2.2)	131.8(131.4)
After discount Price Range	1.79-117.86	51-245	8.92-184.3
Median(IQR)	17.4(40.1)	148.5(89.25)	91.3(130.3)
Discount Range	10.71-10.72	1.71-10.53	0.86-48.52
Median(IQR)	10.71(0)	5.1(2.2)	22.9(4.7)