

Jordanians move towards equitable & affordable medicine prices policies

Approximately 90 participants from the Ministry of Health and other government agencies, pharmacist and physician associations, NGOs, academia, pharmaceutical industry and others met at the Dead Sea, 4-5 December 2007, to discuss ways to make medicines more available and affordable in Jordan. The workshop was held under the patronage of his Excellency, Minister of Health Dr. Salah Mawajdeh. It was co-hosted by the Jordan Food & Drug Administration (JFDA) and Health Action International.

The objectives of the workshop were to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the Jordan price survey, identify policies and programmes to improve, in particular, the availability of medicines in the public sector and the affordability of medicines in the private sector, and to establish a task force to take the work forward.

In addition to presenting the [survey results](#), plenary [presentations](#) and panel discussions covered various policy and pricing issues in Jordan and the Eastern Mediterranean region. In smaller groups, participants then discussed strategies to improve government procurement of medicines and their availability in public sector facilities, price-setting in the private sector, improving treatment affordability through pro-generics policies and programmes, and the impact of intellectual property rights and trade agreements on access to affordable medicines in the country. Group [recommendations](#) for action were then presented in plenary.

One of the many recommendations of the workshop was to remove customs duty (up to 5% on most imported medicines) and sales tax (4% on all medicines). On 3 January 2008, the [Director General of the JFDA Dr Mohamed Rawashdeh](#) announced in a major Jordanian daily newspaper that exempting customs and sales taxes on medicines will not affect the Jordanian economy but will help improve the affordability of treatments. Subsequently, the [Pharmaceutical Association](#) and [Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association](#) supported the JFDA's call for taxes to be removed on medicines. The [President of the Parliament's Health and Environmental Committee, Mr. Khalil Al Ruqad, responded positively](#), saying the Committee will meet to discuss abolishing these taxes in order to lower medicine prices and improve affordability. Most press articles can only be viewed in Arabic.