

International Drug Price Indicator Guide

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Getting relevant and accurate market intelligence for pharmaceutical and other health care product prices can be difficult. MSH's *International Drug Price Indicator Guide* provides an indication of prices on the international market for selected pharmaceuticals, contraceptives, diagnostic tests, and medical supplies. Updated annually, the *Guide* contains a spectrum of prices from suppliers, international development organizations, and government agencies.

The *Guide* aims to make price information more widely available in order to help managers procure quality products for the lowest possible price. Bulk purchasing, competition, skilful negotiation, and sound supply management are mechanisms that can lower the prices of medicines. Access to a central, independent, updated database of comparative price information facilitates these endeavours. The *Guide* provides a useful source of price information for other publications, including *Sources and Prices of Selected Drugs and Diagnostics for People Living with HIV/AIDS*. Median prices from the *Guide* are also used as reference prices in the WHO/Health Action International project, "Medicines Prices: A New Approach to Measurement."

Readers can use the *Guide* for many purposes, including to—

- determine the probable cost of products for their programs;
- compare current prices paid to those available on the international market;
- assess the potential financial impact of changes to a products list; and
- support education in rational prescribing and use of medicines and other health care products.

The *Guide* contains prices for more than 1,200 items, focusing on essential products. The prices come from at least 25 sources, grouped into "buyers" and "sellers," or suppliers. The supplier prices are from organizations (usually non-profit) experienced in delivering medicines to the developing world. The buyer prices are usually from government organizations' international

competitive bidding. Data are collected annually and are published on the web in a searchable database. MSH often produces CD-ROM and print versions of the *Guide* as well.

A 2004 survey of users found—

- 65% do not have access to other sources of comparative, international price information
- 42% use the *Guide* to assess cost implications of different therapies
- 46% said that using the *Guide* has contributed to better acquisition prices or other savings, with nearly half of those saving at least 20%.

Items in the *Guide* are listed and searchable by name or therapeutic class, using the WHO Essential Medicines List classification. The product's ATC code and defined daily dose (DDD) are included for convenience. Both the pack price and the unit price are listed. The unit price is calculated by dividing the package price by the package size. This facilitates comparison of different pack sizes. The unit used to compare prices varies with the type of product and pharmaceutical preparation. A median buyer price and median supplier prices are included (see Figure 1). The median is a type of average; it is whatever value splits a series of values in half when the series is put in ascending order. This is likely to be more valuable than a simple average for estimation and comparison when there is a skewed distribution.

The 2008 edition of the *International Drug Price Indicator Guide* was produced in collaboration with the World Health Organization and supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Medicines Transparency Alliance (MeTA). Data from the 1996 edition to the present edition are available online at <http://erc.msh.org/priceguide>, along with special features to create custom lists of medicines, compare your prices, and plan a budget. The explanatory text of the *Guide* is provided in English, French, and Spanish.

Generic Name	Metformin HCL			
	Therapeutic Categories (18.5.) Insulins and other antidiabetic agents			
Save this drug to my list Save	Strength	500 mg	Dosage Form	Tab-cap
	Route of Administration	Oral preparation	Defined Daily Dose	2 G
	WHO Status	E	ATC Code	A10BA02
Supplier Prices		Prices are in US\$.		
Source	Package	Package Price	Unit Price	
MISSION	1000 Tab-cap (Tablets)	\$ 4.79	0.0048/Tab-cap	
MEG	1000 Tab-cap (Film-coated tablets)	\$ 6.35	0.0064/Tab-cap	
IDA	500 Tab-cap (Tablets)	\$ 3.78	0.0076/Tab-cap	
IMRES	100 Tab-cap (Film-coated tablets)	\$ 0.95	0.0095/Tab-cap	
MEDS	30 Tab-cap (Tablets)	\$ 0.52	0.0175/Tab-cap	
DURBIN	500 Tab-cap (Tablets)	\$ 9.17	0.0183/Tab-cap	
MEDEOR/EU	1000 Tab-cap (Tablets)	\$ 24.77	0.0248/Tab-cap	
JMS	100 Tab-cap (Tablets)	\$ 3.27	0.0327/Tab-cap	
MEDEOR/TZ	100 Tab-cap (Tablets)	\$ 5.13	0.0513/Tab-cap	
	Median Price	0.0175/Tab-cap	Lowest Price	0.0048/Tab-cap
	High/Low Ratio	10.69	Highest Price	0.0513/Tab-cap
Buyer Prices				
Source	Package	Package Price	Unit Price	
SENEGAL	100 Tab-cap (Tablet, illustrative pack size)	\$ 0.69	0.0069 /Tab-cap	
SAFRICA	500 Tab-cap (Tablets)	\$ 4.92	0.0098 /Tab-cap	
BDS	500 Tab-cap (Tablets)	\$ 5.46	0.0109 /Tab-cap	
OECS/PPS	1000 Tab-cap (Tablets)	\$ 18.85	0.0189 /Tab-cap	
MEMS	100 Tab-cap (Tablets)	\$ 3.02	0.0302 /Tab-cap	
	Median Price	0.0109/Tab-cap	Lowest Price	0.0069/Tab-cap
	High/Low Ratio	4.38	Highest Price	0.0302/Tab-cap

Figure 1: Example of International Drug Price Indicator Guide website results

Figure 2: Example of website results

Author Biography

Julie Frye is the editor of the *International Drug Price Indicator Guide*. She is a Senior Program Associate in the Management Sciences for Health (MSH) Center for Pharmaceutical Management. She contributes to MSH work in tools development, dissemination, and support, on applications ranging from inventory management databases to web-based leadership development trainings. She has worked with the *International Drug Price Indicator Guide* and MSH software tools since 1993.