Policy shift on generic drugs

What is the issue?

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- Earlier government made a decision that all doctors will have to prescribe medicines using their generic or chemical names.
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- Now there is a policy shift that doctors cannot be banned from prescribing the brand names of the generic drugs.
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What are generic drugs?

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- A brand-name drug product is originally discovered and developed by a pharmaceutical company.
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- It is estimated that bringing a new drug to market costs the innovator on average $802 million over a period of 10 to 15 years.
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- So a patent allows the innovator to sell the branded drug exclusively in order to recoup money spent during development and to generate a profit.
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- Generics are off-patent, less-expensive drugs that are chemically similar to an innovative drug.
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What are the reasons for the shift?

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- There is a contradiction in asking doctors to prescribe generics when the market is full of branded drugs.
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- There is a lack of confidence in the quality of medicines being dispensed.
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- Writing out all the key ingredients while prescribing even a simple medicine can be difficult.
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- If the chemist does not understand the prescription, it creates more problems.
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- Pharmacists in chemist shops will gain more power to decide which brand of generic drug is to be given to a patient.
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How can the issues be addressed?

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- Patients in developed countries get their medicines from a well-developed healthcare system and not the retail market.
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- Investment in the drug regulatory and testing infrastructure to ensure that quality drugs.
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- Companies are supported to meet GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) norms.
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- Only then will consumers and doctors have confidence that a medicine picked up anywhere in the country is of a good quality.
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Source: Business Line

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