Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana
- A short study of impact in Bengaluru City
This study is about...

A developing economy like India with a mix of a young and aging population has to focus on healthcare to scale up the development chain. For the year 2015-16, total health expenditure (THE) for the country was approximately Rs 5,28,484 Crores (3.84% of GDP, Rs 4116 per capita)

Government health expenditure is approximately 1,61,863 Crores, approximately 30.6% of total health expenditure. The rest is catered to by the private sector.

Out of Pocket expenses forms the largest part of current health expenditure, which is approximately 65% in India as of 2016.

Total Pharmaceutical expenditure is 35.4% of the health expenditure. Successive governments have focused on trying to reduce this expenditure. PMBJP was touted as one of the most promising Government of India schemes to tackle and better manage the expense.

However, even after awareness advertisements, extensive promotion and Prime Minister driven video conferences with PMBJP store owners and end users, awareness regarding generic drugs and Janaushadhi Kendras seems to be picking up at a snail’s pace. This will seriously impact the core objectives of the scheme. This prompted Parkes and Rao Research to undertake a brief study to understand the attitude of consumers towards generic drugs, their pain points and perceptions about products and service satisfaction.

The study sought to understand the impact of the scheme in a city like Bengaluru, understand the highlights and shortcomings of the scheme and provide useful insights to the stakeholders and was undertaken voluntarily.

History of PMBJP

The Jan Aushadhi Scheme was launched is a direct market intervention scheme launched by Dept of Pharmaceuticals under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, Government of India to make quality generic medicines (both for acute and chronic diseases) at affordable prices to all the citizens through a specialized outlet called as Jan Aushadhi Store. The first Jan Aushadhi Store was launched in Amritsar Civil Hospital on November 25, 2008. Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI) was registered under the societies act in 2010 and is the implementation agency for Jan Aushadhi Scheme.

The original plan was to open JAS in each of the 630 districts of the country to be extended to sub-divisional village levels, major towns and village centers. However, Jan Aushadhi Stores were selling about 131 different medicines through 99 Stores in 2014. This was reportedly due to the over dependence on support from state government, poor supply chain issues and chronic stock-outs, lack of awareness, poor public response, non-prescription of generic

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2. https://apps.who.int/nha/database/ViewData/Indicators/en
medicines by physicians etc., as assessed by the Rapid Assessment and Potential Scale up report on Jan Aushadhi scheme in December 2012.

An effective Strategic Action Plan (SAP 2015) was prepared, submitted and approved by the Government in September 2015 to achieve the objectives set in the key areas of significance such as Availability, Acceptability, Accessibility, Affordability, Awareness and Effective Implementation of the scheme.

It was rebranded in 2015 as “Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana” (PMBJP) and a lot more thrust was given to increase not only the number of outlets, but also the number of generic medicines, surgicals and other consumables made available in the renamed “Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Kendra”.

As of May 15, 2019, the number of Janaushadhi Kendras stand at 5,222 covering all the 35 states and union territories across the country.

The products sold through the Jan Aushadhi Kendras today include of a wide array of 954+ items (800 drugs & 154 surgical & consumables). These are quality assured as they are procured from WHO-GMP certified organizations and CPSUs, tested by The National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL). BPPI has established state of the art cold chain facilitated ultra-modern central warehouses to maintain the integrity of quality and efficient software-based solutions for auto dispatches to stores in time.

**Survey Methodology**

The city was divided into five zones, North, South, East, West and Central for the data collection.

A survey of customers of Janaushadhi Kendras across the five major zones in Bengaluru was conducted. The city houses 71 Janaushadhi stores (May 15, 2019) and being a home to a diverse and cosmopolitan customer base, provides a varying perspective which is suitable for the analysis. 300 respondents (across 40 stores covering all the zones) who purchased medicines either for themselves or for their family members at Janaushadhi Kendras responded to face to face store exit interviews between 11th and 31st March 2019.

**Findings & Observations**

**Demographics**

![Figure 1 Demographics](image)

It was observed that people in the age range of 41-60 Yrs. form the largest proportion of consumers for the Jan Aushadhi stores, followed by 61-80 Yrs.

One of the interesting observations was that the bulk of the medicines purchased by the respondents were for blood pressure and
diabetes, reflecting the age profile of those using the service.

**Awareness of Generic Drugs**

Just over a half of the consumers surveyed are aware of the generic medicines available.

71% of the respondents say that the doctors continue to prescribe branded medicines and not generic medicines.

**Stores and Utilities**

Analyzing the results with the respondents across different age groups, gender and income group, it was observed that 86% of the respondents buy their medicines from neighborhood medical stores, only 7% buy it from branded medical chain stores paying cash.

**Figure 2 Awareness of Generic Drugs**

**Figure 4 Mode of Payment**

It was interesting to see a negligible correlation between the mode of payment and age, between youngsters (those who use smartphone are also seen paying cash for their / family members’ monthly medicines. This may be because, very few (2%) respondents are using online / mobile app for buying medicines. The same respondents when asked whether they use any other online shopping app to purchase clothes, grocery, lifestyle items, etc., the response is generally positive.
Knowledge about Jan Aushadhi Kendra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Ads</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends / Relatives</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My doctor suggested me</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>19%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5 Knowledge of Jan Aushadhi Stores**

Knowledge of Jan Aushadhi stores seem to be percolating slowly, but steadily. Positive word of mouth is going viral in driving more consumers towards generic drugs in Jan Aushadhi Kendras.

Duration of using Jan Aushadhi Kendras

- 1-2 months: 29%
- 2-4 months: 15%
- 4-5 months: 11%
- 6 months - 1 year: 10%
- Others: 25%

**Figure 6 Duration of Use of Jan Aushadhi Kendra**

62% of the consumers have switched buying to Jan Aushadhi Kendra stores in the last 4-6 months.

Level of satisfaction with the Jan Aushadhi Stores

- Extremely satisfied: 42%
- Satisfied: 54%
- Dissatisfied: 4%

**Figure 7 Level of satisfaction with the Jan Aushadhi Stores**

More than half of the consumers are happy with the stocks being available in their respective stores.

Availability of Medicine

- Store service: 8%
- Store operating hours: 16%
- Store is convenient (location): 32%
- Store personnel are informative: 22%
- Availability of stocks: 54%
- Quality medicines: 72%
- Lower prices / affordable: 89%

**Figure 8 Benefits of Jan Aushadhi**

Lower Prices and Quality of Medicines stand out as the two top benefits that consumers appear to be getting from Jan Aushadhi stores. 89% of the consumers say the biggest benefit is affordable prices.
Satisfaction & Recommendations

Figure 9 Level of Satisfaction

An astounding 96% of the consumers are either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the Jan Aushadhi stores. Though the options “Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied” and “Extremely dissatisfied” were provided to the consumers, it was interesting that none of the consumers chose either of the options.

Figure 10 Likelihood of Recommendation

Satisfied customers are the brand ambassadors of the Jan Aushadhi Kendras. 91% of the consumers have expressed that they are likely or extremely likely to recommend about the store and/or generic drugs to others. Even here, not a single consumer has chosen “Unlikely” or “Extremely unlikely” to recommend even though the options were available.

Problems & Recommendations

Though the survey respondents gave a very positive response to the scheme as a whole, there were some aspects where they believed that there could be improvements.

Figure 11 Typical problems faced

Nearly 1 in 4 consumers find it difficult to map the chemical / generic name on the generic drug with the branded drugs prescribed by the doctors.

23% consumers say that all the branded medicines prescribed by their physicians are not available at Jan Aushadhi Kendras. This is primarily due to lack of awareness among consumers about the licenses / patents expiry dates associated with branded drugs.

The respondents were asked if a Smartphone app can resolve some of their confusions related to lengthy and confusing generic salt names.
46% of the consumers perceive that a smartphone app can resolve issues related to mapping generic drug names with alternative brands.

65% of respondents mentioned that they don’t use any smartphone app to check or buy their medicines.

Another interesting aspect that came out was on the prescription from doctors.

55% of the consumers believe that handwriting of the doctors on the prescriptions continue to confuse. Doctors’ prescription needs to be given in uppercases, to make it easier to read.

Expectations of Customers

As a critically acclaimed scheme for the benefit of the poor and middle class, the Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana is possibly inching towards meeting the desired objectives of

- Availability
- Acceptability
- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Awareness and
- Effective Implementation of the Scheme.
The Government also had released RFPs for the development of a smartphone application. However, some of these have yet to come to fruition.

Some of the critical qualitative suggestions that consumers gave and a few of them being repeated are captured below.

- Stock availability for specific drugs needs to be maintained. In a few cases, people buy medicines for 3 months as they are paranoid of the availability of such medicines.
- Government should open diagnostic labs on the same lines.
- Operating times can be extended.
- Opening outlets near highways so that people traveling can get the benefits out of it.
- Mandate Government doctors to prescribe only generic medicine wherever available.
- For certain compositions prescribed by doctors, there might be two generic drugs. Taking a combination of multiple tablets instead of one becomes difficult to manage especially for the elderly and not so literate.
- The names of the drugs should also be printed in regional languages in addition to English.
- Door delivery should be arranged. That would help the elderly.
- Number of stores needs to be increased.

**Recommendations**

Having assessed the responses both qualitative and quantitative, it leads to the conclusion that the scheme has indeed been executed like a flagship scheme of the Government. However, there definitely is scope for improvement.

India being the technology hub, the Government should increase the efforts to put technology to good use in such beneficial schemes. It is strongly recommended to use technology throughout the life cycle of medicine - all the way from manufacturing to procurement to supply chain and the last mile, the Jan Aushadhi Kendra.

Some of our recommendations so as to ensure that more people are gaining the real benefit would be:

1. Mandate government doctors to prescribe generic medicines as the first priority.
2. Consider packaging multiple medicines into one pack wherever applicable. The packaging can also be based on weekly consumption.
3. Develop a smartphone application - preferably a multi-lingual one that can solve a multitude of issues.
   a. Primarily mapping the Generic drugs to branded drugs.
   b. Display the details of the tablets in multi-lingual formats.
   c. Alerts to the end user to replenish based on the last billing.
   d. Online ordering
4. Implement a centralized billing and inventory management system that not only takes care of warehouse, but also the last mile. Inventory system should trigger alerts to replenish stocks based on
consumption patterns for each of the stores.

5. Tie-up with India Post for door delivery, possibly through ‘Speed Post’ mode. This would enable better usage of resources for India Post, create bigger market for PMBJP and help the elderly. Delivery charges could be subsidized to Senior Citizens, while charging the others.

6. Create greater awareness about Jan Aushadhi scheme and open more outlets.

7. One of the key reasons people are getting used to generic medicines is the quality of the medicines provided. The Government has to ensure that the quality remains the topmost priority and there is no compromise on that. A single instance of bad quality might obliterate the scheme all together.

8. Work with MCI / Industry bodies to prescribe generic medicines as far as possible and also to mandate clarity in prescriptions by the doctors.

9. Though secondary research reveals that the Government is working with some private players in procuring the generic drugs from them, there would come a time when the demand increases beyond the current supply. It would be beneficial for the planners to plan for the future and involve some of the small-scale pharmaceutical industry as a part of the ecosystem at this stage, with strict quality checks, rather than waiting to hit the roadblock and then start scouting for partners. This would also lead to job generation across the supply chain.

10. Work with the pharmaceutical industry to provide more of the expensive drugs for chronic and life-threatening diseases like cancer at affordable prices.

In conclusion, it appears that this flagship scheme of the Government has been executed until now on a mission mode. There definitely is scope for improvement to make this another significant success story.
Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

1. Name: .................
2. Age: .................
3. Area: .................
4. Any specific ailment:
   a. BP
   b. Sugar
   c. Cardiac
5. In general, where do you buy your medicines at
   a. Neighborhood medical store (like, Arvind medicals, Sri Ram Pharmacy etc.,)
   b. Branded stores (like, Medplus, Lifecare, Apollo, Trust etc.,)
   c. Online (lap top/ computer)
   d. Mobile App
   e. Any other .........................
6. How frequently do you buy medicines for you / family members?
   a. Once a week
   b. Once in 15 days
   c. Once a month
   d. Others (specify)
7. How do you pay for your medicine/s?
   a. Cash
   b. Bank Card (debit / credit)
   c. Mobile wallet (like Paytm, PhonePe, Bhim, UPI etc.,)
   d. Online bank transfer to store
   e. Others (specify)
8. For whom do you buy ‘Jan Aushadhi’ medicine/s?
   a. Self
   b. Others (pls specify) (like, spouse, children, in-laws, pregnant women)
   c. Both
9. How did you get to know about ‘Jan Aushadhi’ Kendras?
   a. Government Ads
   b. Friends / Relatives
   c. My doctor suggested me
   d. Others (specify)
10. For how long have you been buying medicine from 'Jan Aushadhi’ Kendras?
    a. 1-2 months
    b. 2-4 months
    c. 4-5 months
    d. Over six months
    e. Others (specify)
11. Do you get all the medicines prescribed by your doctors in ‘Jan Aushadhi’ Kendras?
   a. Yes
   b. Partially yes (Mostly I get all medicines in Jan Aushadhi, few others I buy from other stores)
   c. No
12. What are the benefits you have seen buying from ‘Jan Aushadhi’ Kendras, compared to other medical stores? (TOP THREE benefits can be selected)
   a. Lower prices / affordable
   b. Quality medicines
   c. Availability of stocks
   d. Store personnel are informative
   e. Store is convenience (location)
   f. Store operating hours
   g. Store service
   h. Others (specify)

13. What are the problems you have faced while buying medicines at ‘Jan Aushadhi’ Kendra’s? (TOP THREE problems can be selected)
   a. Lengthy medicine names (salt name)
   b. Salt names are complicated to understand
   c. Doctor’s prescription (brand) and Jan Aushadhi medicine names differ significantly
   d. Lack of medicine stocks
   e. Very few stores near my locality
   f. All the medicines prescribed my doctor are not available
   g. Others (specify)

14. Do you think, a smartphone App can help in solving your problems related to lengthy and confusing ‘generic medicine names’
   a. Yes
   b. Maybe
   c. No

15. What are the ‘Smartphone Apps’ you use to buy your medicines
   a. Medplus App
   b. Practo App
   c. Apollo App
   d. Others (specify)
   e. None

16. How aware are you as a consumer / patient, to request your doctor to prescribe the generic name of medicine (e.g. Paracetamol) instead of a branded drug (e.g. Crocin, Dolo 650 etc.,)?

17. Does your doctor prescribe generic medicines (e.g. Paracetamol) in the place of branded medicines (e.g. Crocin, Dolo 650 etc.,)?

18. Does your doctor prescribe medicines in the ‘CAPITAL LETTERS / UPPER CASE’ to ease your reading?

19. How satisfied are you about quality of medicines available at ‘Jan Aushadhi’ Kendra?
   a. Extremely satisfied
   b. Satisfied
   c. Neither Satisfied, nor dissatisfied
   d. Dissatisfied
   e. Extremely dissatisfied
20. How likely are you to recommend ‘Jan Aushadhi’ Kendra to others?
   a. Extremely likely
   b. Likely
   c. Neutral
   d. Unlikely
   e. Extremely unlikely

21. What are your suggestions for improving the services at ‘Jan Aushadhi’ Kendra’s (Please elaborate)

Additional References:
Our Coordinates:
Parkes & Rao Research International Pvt Ltd
71, VV Nagar 1st Stage, Bengaluru 560061
vbs@parkesrao.com