Most medications have both a brand name and a generic name. The brand name medications are usually more expensive because the brand name company usually needs to spend more money than generic brand companies for completing additional required testing and trials. The FDA will approve generic forms of medications if they have the same safety, effectiveness, strength, stability, and quality as the brand name.1

In medical school, students spend hours learning drug names, classes, mechanisms of action, side effects and much more; however, when they get to the hospitals students quickly notice that many of the drug names being used in the hospital are different than what they were taught in school. Many doctors refer to drugs by their brand names rather than their generic names.2 They may do this because they find it more convenient or because of behavior modeled by their attending physicians. Additionally, some physicians are skeptical about generic medications in general, and that is why they use brand names.3 Regardless, calling medications by their brand names has many detrimental side effects. These issues will be discussed in this article.

There are several disadvantages to referring to medications by their brand names.

1: **It can result in higher health care costs:** The doctor may tell the patient that they should get a particular brand name medication; patients often do not realize that there
may be a generic for the prescribed medication or may think that the doctor is telling them to specifically get the exact brand that they are mentioning. The patient will then go buy the brand name medication which is usually more expensive, thereby adding to their healthcare cost.\textsuperscript{2,4}

2: \textbf{It is confusing to medical students and residents:} In medical school student physicians are taught the generic names of medications, and the medical board exams only test using generic names of medications. Because many student doctors and residents are more familiar with generic names of medications, when attending physicians in the hospital use brand names of medications it can cause confusion and potentially lead to errors. This may ultimately result in adverse events and worse patient outcomes.

3: \textbf{There are several brand name medications that have similar abbreviations:} Several brand name medications have similar abbreviations and can be confused with each other. Additionally, doctors sometimes use brand names and other times use generic names, this adds even more room for error. For example, an attending may ask for levo and they may mean Levothyroxine, Levocetirizine, Levofloxacin, Levorphanol, Levodopa or Levophed.

4: \textbf{It is unprofessional:} When the patient hears their doctor refer to a medication by its brand name it elevates the brand in their eyes. Physicians should not be using their position as healthcare professionals to advertise for brand name medications, even unintentionally.

5: \textbf{Newer practitioners don’t associate mechanism of action of medication with brand name medication:} A study in Australia found that when Physicians/health care workers and medical students were asked about the mechanism of action for brand name medications they did not know it very well.\textsuperscript{5}

6: \textbf{International communication:} Generic names are understood internationally while brand names are more widely known and used in specific countries.\textsuperscript{6}

Due to the reasons enumerated above it is the conclusion of the authors of this paper that physicians should try to use the generic names of medications. Additionally, hospitals
should educate incoming physicians on this topic and emphasize the importance of using the generic names of medication.

References:


