

MTIA 1279/67

MEMORANDUM FOR CABINET BY THE HON.
MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE

Price Listing of Medicinal Preparations

In terms of the Sale of Commodities (Control) (Amendment) Regulations, 1965 (L.N. No. 4/65) retailers of certain commodities, amongst which are listed medicinal preparations, must exhibit a price-list in a prominent place in their establishment.

2. At the time when these Regulations were made Pharmacists had contended that it was impracticable to exhibit an up-to-date list of all the commodities they stocked as this would run into hundred of items with prices changing almost overnight. This was reasonable and, in agreement with the Medical and Health Authorities, it was decided to restrict the list to the medicinals, etc., in general every day use. The Medical and Health Authorities, however, failed to draw up the required list.

3. Following the devaluation of the sterling, it was deemed expedient to issue the Sale of Commodities (Control) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations, 1967 to freeze the wholesale and the retail prices of all commodities at the level prevailing between the 13th and the 17th November, 1967. Medicinal preparations are amongst the commodities covered by these Regulations and, as it had been confirmed that on the day following devaluation importers and pharmacists had unilaterally increased the price of certain drugs, etc., the matter was again taken up with the Medical and Health authorities but with negative results.

4. As it was considered essential for the protection of the consumer that pharmacists should be made to exhibit a price-list, it was proposed by the Ministry of Trade to amend the Regulations in such a way as to provide for the exhibition of a price-list showing only the articles in general everyday use as shown at Appendix A.

5. The assistance of the Ministry of Health was sought in this regard but again with negative results as that Ministry considered "that the only practicable way of controlling the price of drugs is by insisting that each unit should bear a price tag". That Ministry also pointed out however: that "cost of the same drug may vary according to the standard of the firm producing such drug".

6. The decision to proceed with the publication of the Amendment was deferred as on the 31st May, 1968, the Ministry of Health whilst reiterating its views on the proposed amendment suggested that the question be referred

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for consideration by the Pharmacy Board which was then in the process of being set up.

7. The Ministry of Health has now confirmed that it is in agreement with the advice by the Pharmacy Board i.e. that "the Board is favourable to the amendment proposed by the Hon. Minister of Trade, Industry and Agriculture, namely, that the list be restricted to medicinal preparations of general everyday use, provided that the list of such medicinal preparations be compiled and amended from time to time by this Board and that the said list shall not be exhibited as this would be impracticable, but that the price of every item appearing on the list be clearly shown on the item".

8. The Ministry of Trade cannot agree to the list being compiled and amended by the Board, in view of the vested interests of the Board. This Ministry is responsible for price control and thus must have the final say in the compilation of the list. With regard to the exhibition of the list, the Board appears to have viewed the issue solely from the practicability aspect in so far as it affects the pharmaceutical profession. The Board's suggestion is far from realistic and it cannot be agreed to by this Ministry. In the interest of the general public it is considered essential that a price-list be exhibited prominently in all pharmacies. Experience has shown that this is the best, and perhaps the only way, of ensuring effective price-control since it enables the consumer to compare prices and to refuse his custom.

9. Hon. Ministers are invited to consider this question and to agree to the amendment as proposed at paragraph 4 above.

L-ARKIVI NAZZIONALI TA' MALTA

25 April, 1969.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS, ETC.
FOR INSERTION IN THE PROPOSED PRICE-LIST

Antibiotics - ointments for oral use, injections
Antiseptics - Dettol, T.C.P., iodine, Iodex,
 acriflavine

Cough mixtures - Famel Syrup, Pulmo, Bailly,
 Johnny Bunny

First Aid - Elastoplast, cotton wool, gauze,
 bandages

Injections - insulin, tetanus, neuphosphates

Laxatives - Magnesia, Enos, Beechams Pills

Sedatives - Aspro, Disperin, Aspirin, Luminal

Vitamins - Millivites, Minadex, Cod Liver Oil,
 Vitamin "B", "C", "D"

Thermometers

Toilet requisites - lipstick, face powder,
 cold creams, lavender water,
 toothpastes, shaving creams,
 sanitary towels (external and
 internal)