CURRENT AFFAIRS

CHEAPER CANCER MEDICINES FROM TODAY: WHAT CHANGED AND WHAT TO CHECK

By **Kamlesh Bhagatkar**, *Author & Geopolitical Analyst · 9 November 2026*

From today, 9 November 2026, revised maximum retail prices (MRPs) apply to 1,364 anti-cancer formulations sold in India. The Department of Pharmaceuticals said in a release this morning that 85 pharmaceutical companies had reported the new prices by 8 November, covering 121 drugs. Of these, 679 brands reported price cuts of more than 50 per cent. The largest single cut reported was 96.45 per cent.

The government estimates that consumers will save Rs 3,540.38 crore a year.

The cuts come from a decision by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) to cap trade margins on 137 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs. The list was drawn up on the recommendation of an expert committee set up by the Directorate General of Health Services. The NPPA announced the move on 17 October, through notification SO 5690(E), and capped the trade margin at 30 per cent.

What a trade margin cap does

Most families never see the price a medicine company charges its distributor. They see only the MRP on the strip or the vial. The gap between the two is the trade margin, shared along the chain of distributors, stockists and retailers. The government judged that for these drugs the gap was too wide. Its release of 28 October said the NPPA acted "to address excessive trade margins, make cancer treatment more affordable and improve access to anti-cancer medicines."

So the NPPA limited how much can be added between the company and the patient. According to Swarajya, the new MRP is worked out from the price charged to stockists or distributors in March 2026, plus the capped margin and GST.

The examples in the NPPA's list of 28 October show what this means at the counter. A 10-tablet pack of Anarzole (anastrozole 1 mg), from RPG Life Sciences, went from Rs 695.76 to Rs 73. A 4 ml vial of Bevacizab (bevacizumab 100 mg), from Abbott Healthcare, went from Rs 21,767.70 to Rs 5,930.13. A 60 mg pre-filled syringe of Debrumab (denosumab), also from RPG Life Sciences, went from Rs 22,031.25

to Rs 5,941. According to the government, the 137 drugs include immunotherapy medicines used for more than 20 types of cancer, denosumab used by breast and prostate cancer patients, pegfilgrastim used to prevent neutropenia, and bevacizumab, approved for colon, ovarian and cervical cancers.

Why this matters for families

Cancer treatment is usually given in cycles over months, so the bill arrives again and again. At the old price, five vials of the bevacizumab brand above came to more than Rs 1 lakh. At the new price, the same five cost under Rs 30,000.

For a household paying for that, a cut of several thousand rupees on a single vial is real money. I think this is one of the more useful things a regulator can do, because it acts on the price at the point of sale instead of asking the patient to claim something back later.

The approach has been tried before. In 2019, the NPPA ran a pilot that capped trade margins at 30 per cent for 42 anti-cancer drugs, and, according to the ministry as reported by ANI, prices of 526 brands came down by up to 90 per cent. The new exercise applies the same method to a much longer list.

What to check, and what to watch

The rule is simple. No chemist or hospital pharmacy can charge more than the revised MRP. The ministry has asked consumers to check the revised MRP printed on the pack, and to verify prices on the Pharma Sahi Daam mobile app or the NPPA website, nppa.gov.in. Complaints about overcharging can go to the Pharma Jan Samadhan portal or the NPPA helpline at 1800-111-255.

The list is still growing. When the NPPA published its first list on 28 October, it covered 543 brands, based on what companies had submitted by 27 October. By 8 November the count had reached 1,364 formulations. The NPPA has said it will keep updating the list as manufacturers submit revised prices. So if your medicine does not show a new price yet, it may simply not have been added.

Old stock is the thing I would watch most closely in the coming weeks. I expect packs printed with the old MRP to stay on some shelves for a while, even though the revised price applies from today. My guess is that families buying in smaller towns, far from the hospital where treatment started, are the most likely to be charged the old figure without knowing. Checking the app before paying takes a minute.

The other question is enforcement. According to ANI, retailers, dealers, hospitals and medical institutions are required to display the updated price lists on their premises and websites, and the measures stay in force until further notice. Whether that happens at every pharmacy counter will decide how much of the Rs 3,540.38 crore actually reaches patients.

Sources

- PIB, Department of Pharmaceuticals: Revised MRPs of 1,364 anti-cancer formulations come into effect from today

- PIB, Department of Pharmaceuticals: NPPA releases revised MRP for 543 brands of anti-cancer medicines
- Swarajya: Cancer patients gain access to cheaper medicines as NPPA's revised pricing comes into force today
- The News Mill (ANI): NPPA enforces revised MRPs on 1,364 anti-cancer formulations
- The News Mill (ANI): NPPA caps trade margins at 30% for 137 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs
- Sambad English (IANS): Cancer drug prices slashed by up to 96.45%; patients to save Rs 3,540 crore annually



Kamlesh Bhagatkar

Author and geopolitical analyst from Nagpur. Author of *RSS: 100 Years of Selfless Service* (2025); his next book, *Nineteen Days*, tells the story of Pahalgam and Operation Sindoor.

KAMLESHBHAGATKAR.COM