

# 384 drugs on essential medicines list

Ivermectin and mupirocin have been added, while ranitidine and sucralfate have been dropped

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Twenty-six drugs, including the common gastrointestinal medicines ranitidine and sucralfate, have been excluded from the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM), 2022, released on Tuesday by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya.

A total of 384 drugs find place on the list with the addition of 34 drugs. Twenty-six from the previous list have been dropped. The medicines have been categorised into 27 therapeutic categories. The first NLEM was compiled in 1996 and was revised thrice in 2003, 2011, and 2015.

According to a Health Ministry official, drugs deleted from the NLEM include medicines banned in India and those having reports of concerns on the safety profile.

“Drugs also go off the list if medicines with better efficacy or favourable safety profile and better cost-effectiveness become available. Also if the disease burden for which a medicine is indicated is no longer a national health concern, it is deleted from the NLEM,” the official said. In case of antimicrobials, if the resistance pattern has rendered them ineffective, the drugs are taken off the list.

The new list includes four drugs that are still under pa-



## Core medicine needs

■ The pricing of essential medicines is regulated by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority

■ The new list includes four drugs that are still under patent — bedaquiline and delamanid used in the treatment of drug-

resistant tuberculosis, dolutegravir used to treat HIV infection, and daclatasvir used in treating viral infections such as Hepatitis C

■ No drugs used specifically for the treatment of COVID-19 have been included in the list

The list has 384 drugs across 27 categories

Several antibiotics, vaccines, anti-cancer drugs and many other important drugs would become more affordable, and the “out-of-pocket expenditure” on health care would come down —MANSUKH MANDAVIYA, Health Minister

tent – bedaquiline and delamanid used in the treatment of multiple drug-resistant tuberculosis, dolutegravir used to treat human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, and daclatasvir used in treating viral infections such as Hepatitis C, the Health Ministry said.

No drugs used specifically for the treatment of COVID-19 have been made part of the list as the committee in charge of the list is of the view that the clinical trials to check the efficacy of the drugs are not yet conclusive, it said.

Several antibiotics, vaccines and anti-cancer drugs are set to become more affordable with their addition to the list. Ivermectin, mupiro-

cin and nicotine replacement therapy have been added. Endocrine medicines and contraceptives fludrocortisone, ormeloxifene, insulin glargine and teneligliptin have been added to the list. Montelukast, which acts on the respiratory tract, and ophthalmological drug latanoprost figure in the list.

Cardiovascular medicines dabigatran and tenecteplase also find place in the list, as also medicines used in palliative care. The drugs in the NLEM are included in the schedule category and their price is regulated by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority.

In a tweet on Tuesday, the Health Minister said that several antibiotics, vaccines, anti-

ti-cancer drugs and many other important drugs would become more affordable, and the “out-of-pocket expenditure” on health care would come down.

“The primary purpose of the NLEM is to promote rational use of medicines considering the three important aspects – cost, safety and efficacy. It also helps in optimum utilisation of health-care resources and budget; drug procurement policies; health insurance; improving prescribing habits; medical education and drafting pharmaceutical policies,” he said.

Bharati Pravin Pawar, Minister of State for Health, stressed the need to enhance awareness regarding antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

which she said “is emerging as a big challenge for our scientists and community and we need to create awareness in the society about AMR”. Sudarshan Jain, secretary-general, Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance, noted that the pharmaceutical industry in India was a strategic sector that was recognised around the world for providing affordable and high-quality medicines.

Malini Aisola, of the All India Drug Action Network, said that the release of the NLEM, 2022, comes after a long gap of seven years, when it is recommended for an NLEM to be revised more frequently, every two-three years, to be responsive to changing health needs. She said that the industry associations had been rallying to keep patented medicines out of the NLEM which to some degree was successful.

“However, in respect of cancer, it is disappointing that more of the highly priced, effective treatments for various cancers have not been included in the list. It is positive that the diabetes section has been expanded to include teneligliptin and insulin glargine. However, there was a need to include more synthetic insulins and other classes of oral antidiabetics keeping in view the diabetes epidemic in the country,” she said.