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Argentina: Physicians Required To Prescribe Generics; Domestic Market Open To Pharmaceutical Imports

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On Jan. 21, a new policy package aimed at reducing prices on pharmaceuticals and breaking up domestic market "monopolies" went into effect. Pharmacies, drug stores, and public and private health care providers are now authorized to import pharmaceutical products manufactured in the US, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, Israel, Canada, Austria, Germany, France, UK, Belgium, Denmark, Spain and Italy, among other countries. Health Minister Cesar Araoz said that early this year, domestic companies and foreign subsidiaries acted in concert to raise prices from 5% to 240% on a variety of drug products. Pharmaceutical company sales receipts on the domestic market average about US\$2 billion per year. Physicians are now required to fill out prescriptions specifying generic drugs rather than brand names. At present, between 500 and 600 generic names are registered in Argentina, compared to about 5,000 brand-name drugs. (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, 01/21/92)

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