Hindustan Times, Delhi
Monday 11th January 2016, Page: 7

AMRIT store at AIIMS gives relief from expensive drugs

Anonna Dutt
Email: annonna.dutt@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Medicines for cancer and heart diseases are being sold at prices that are 56% to 90% lower than the MRP at India's first AMRIT (Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment) store at AIIMS.

The store, opened by HLL Lifecare Ltd in collaboration with the Union health ministry on November 15 last year, procures and sells such medicines at minimal profit to everyone who produces a prescription, irrespective of their economic status.

People with prescriptions not being treated at AIIMS can also buy these medicines at a discounted price.

"The AMRIT store sells the drugs at heavy discounts because the purchasing price of such drugs, especially those for cancer, is much less than the MRP mentioned on the pack. We sell it for a minimal profit," said an HLL official who runs the store.

One of the beneficiaries of the cheap drugs is Ranjit Kumar Das, 58, who had a bypass surgery two years ago, and was at the store on 12 (when did he visit) to buy vasodilator medicines. "I need to have two tablets twice a day. I just bought two months' worth of medicines. The drug is sold at a cheaper price here when compared to retail stores," he said.

A box of 50 tablets of the medicine, he said, cost him ₹68 at the AMRIT store, while it is priced at ₹590 in retail stores outside.

"We provide implants on a need basis. They can be made available within 2 to 3 days. We will start stocking these implants in a month or so," said Dr M Ayyappan, chairman and managing director, HLL.

The AMRIT store is part of a nationwide programme launched by the Union government with the aim of making treatment for cancer and heart diseases more affordable. The ministry is planning to open 13 more AMRIT stores across the country, of which three would open in Delhi.

The response so far has been overwhelming. This is an important programme of the Union ministry of health and family welfare. More AMRIT stores will come up in different states soon," said Union health minister JP Nadda.