

Medicine prices availability and affordability in 57 developing and middle-income countries: a secondary analysis update

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Introduction. Medication shortages are a global concern. The WHO and HAI have developed a methodology to survey medicine prices, availability, and affordability in low- and middle-income countries. This paper updates the analysis for 57 countries using this methodology.

Aims. To update the analysis of medicine affordability, availability, and pricing across 57 countries using the WHO/HAI methodology, and highlight disparities between public and private sectors.

Methods. We used the HAI Essential Medicines Access Database and four electronic databases to locate studies using the WHO/HAI methodology. 74 surveys from 57 countries were included. Data on availability, affordability, and pricing were extracted and synthesised for 15 commonly surveyed medicines.

Results. Public sector availability of generic medicines ranged from 38.6% to 68.3% across WHO regions. Medicine prices were high, with patients paying 3.2 to 12.4 times international reference prices for generics and over 25 times for originator products. Treatment costs often required multiple days' wages.

Discussion. The results highlight significant disparities in access to essential medicines. Despite some progress, global accessibility remains a concern. Targeted strategies from governments and healthcare organisations are needed to address economic and logistical barriers.

