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No increase in medicine prices this year: Minister of Health

The minister signed an agreement with medicine companies to increase prices of new group of drugs in August, says Al-Leithi

The Egyptian Center for the Right to Medicine warns of a disaster in case the government applied new increases

Minister of Health Ahmed Emad El-Din Rady said the government would not increase the prices of medicine this year.

"There are no discussions with the pharmaceutical companies about increasing prices, and this issue is not negotiable," Rady told Daily News Egypt on the sidelines of "Egyptian Women Can" conference on Sunday.

The Ministry of Health has approved two price hikes on drugs in May 2016 and January 2017, following the demands of many pharmaceutical companies. The first increase included raising prices of all drugs worth less than EGP 30 by 20%, while the ministry approved another increase after the pound flotation, which included increasing prices by 30-50% on 10% of local medicines and on 15% of exported ones.

Gamal Al-Leithi, a member of the Chamber of Pharmaceutical Industry, said that the Ministry of Health signed an agreement with pharmaceutical companies in January to reconsider the prices of a new group of drugs by August.



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Al-Leithi told Daily News Egypt that the companies agreed to the latest increase in drug prices after the ministry had promised to move the prices of another group after six months. The Egyptian Center for the Right to Medicine warned in a statement earlier this week of a disaster in case the government tended to apply new increases amid the current economic conditions.

"Raising prices will have a significant impact on the patients and will hurt their rights," said Mahmoud Fouad, head of the centre. "There are written agreements between the government and companies to increase prices, and we have evidence," he added.

Fouad added that pharmaceutical companies have been waiting since 12 February for a government deci-

sion to increase the prices of 5,000 types starting from August. The centre showed an agreement signed by the Ministry of Health and pharmaceutical companies, where the ministry pledges to start repricing a number of medicines starting from 1 August on the basis of the exchange rate announced three months earlier. The increase would include 20% of drugs produced by foreign companies, 15% from local companies, and 8 types from small factories.

The centre added that the ministry also vowed to increase prices of medicines, which witnessed a previous increase on 12 February (3,010 medicines), in August on the basis of the exchange rate then.

The centre called for pricing medicines on a fixed basis and postponed the companies' requests without reducing production capacity, in addition to settling the prices of the most important medicines of chronic diseases, tumours, diabetes, and heart diseases. The centre pointed out that the ministry's expected decision to raise prices will result in the emergence of three prices of the same pharmaceutical products: the pricing of May 2016, February 2017, and the August 2017 ones, which will cause disputes among pharmacists and patients.