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**I am a clinician for over thirty years serving patients in Georgia to help them achieve their maximum wellness. I am also a healthcare advocate who has publicly educated thousands of people across the country on prescription drug value and safety. I am alarmed by the proposal to amend the Georgia Code by allowing pharmacists to take the prescribing of drugs into their own hands by administering substitutes to the medications doctors have prescribed. This issue is exemplified as more patients feel compelled to switch to generics because of the inappropriate restraints their insurance coverage. The practice of drug switching can be perilous to the safety of patients and the effectiveness of their treatment.**

**One of my patients had been taking medication for diabetes. She was doing well until her pharmacy did not have the prescribed brand medication available. They switched her to a different drug assuring her the formula was exactly the same. Within days she began feeling ill, with many symptoms intensifying. This is unacceptable to patients and physicians. The pharmacist can not be permitted to substitute medications without the full consent of the prescribing physician. This is dangerous to the patient's health, their treatment plan and interferes with the doctor-patient relationship. It is the physician who has taken the oath to do no harm and our laws rest responsibility and liability with the physician. The consequences will be more costly due to potential errors and a decrease in effectiveness of drug treatment that will create the need for more care and strain an already fragile system.**

**A pharmacist may claim that the generic and brand name 'are the same' but by the FDA criteria, they are not! FDA guidelines show the level of the active ingredient is said to be present if its level of bioequivalence is minus 80% to Plus 25% of the branded drug. This gives physicians and all of us as clinician's major concern for our patients getting the correct amount of medication into their bodies. This concern is increase by the fact that no generic drug is required to be tested in patients before it comes to market.**

**Drug Switching is financially driven not scientifically driven. The FDA requires physicians to take responsibility yet there is no information given to physicians about the content or manufacturer of generic drugs. Whenever a drug is changed, the patient must be monitored. As has been stated by Dr. John Goldman, who is Board certified in Internal Medicine, Rheumatology and Allergy and Immunology, he has posted signs in his office that state he only prescribes brand name medications unless the patient requests a generic. Dr. Goldman, other immunologists, rheumatologists, internal medicine specialists and other professional health care practitioners agree that other actions must be implemented such as:**

- **Require all generic drug prescriptions to indicate the manufacturer, country of origin, factory of origin like the national safety data forms and inserts in a patient friendly manner. Pharmacists are to be required to always give these inserts.**
- **Have bioequivalence data from the testing presented to the FDA, with a comprehensive comparison chart of the generic and brand drug package insert.**
- **Have all generic drug labels with a warning stating they have never been tested in patients.**
- **Create a registry that patients and physicians can call, with data collection, when a generic falls short of the efficacy of a brand name drug. The registry contact information should also be placed in the package insert.**

**\*Patients need to assured that the critical decision of the medications they are prescribed is made by the person who knows their medical history, pharmaceutical history and is vested in their treatment and its outcomes...this can only be their prescribing physician.**

**\*Doctors need to fell that their knowledge and skills are not respected, that their patient relationships are intact. They also need to feel confident that both bioequivalence and therapeutic equivalence exists for the medications they prescribe. For now, they don't.**

**\*I urge you to take the recommendations of physicians and the medical practitioners' community to keep the Georgia Code as it is; allowing only physicians to prescribe medications and to stop the illegal practice of Drug Switching.**