

Perception of Healthcare Professionals Regarding Generic Drugs: Impact on their Prescription in Hospital Settings

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Abstract:

➤ Introduction:

Generic drugs have become increasingly prevalent in global healthcare systems, offering a cost-effective alternative to brand-name medications. Despite their documented benefits, the acceptance and utilization of generics remain contentious, particularly in hospital settings where prescriber confidence and patient adherence are crucial. In Morocco, the promotion of generics is integral to national healthcare policies aimed at improving access to affordable medications. However, their prescription and use remain relatively low compared to other countries, due to concerns regarding their effectiveness, safety, and therapeutic interchangeability.

➤ Objectives:

This study aims to evaluate the perception of healthcare professionals regarding generic drugs in Morocco, analyze their impact on prescription practices in hospital settings, and identify factors influencing prescriber attitudes. The study also seeks to enhance understanding of generics' role in improving healthcare accessibility and reducing costs.

➤ Materials and Methods:

A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted between January 1 and January 30, 2025, among 94 licensed physicians practicing in both public and private sectors across Morocco. The study employed an anonymous, validated Google Forms questionnaire to assess the perception of generics and their influence on prescribing practices. Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

➤ Results:

The study revealed a significant reluctance among healthcare professionals toward prescribing generics, with 55% of physicians only recommending generics when bioequivalence is guaranteed. Despite 81% of physicians regularly recommending generics, 70% perceive them as sometimes less effective than brand-name drugs. A majority 55% expressed partial satisfaction with the available information on generics, highlighting the need for improved educational resources. The study also found that price was the primary factor influencing patients acceptance of generics, particularly among lower-income individuals.

➤ Conclusion:

This study underscores the need for enhanced education and training on the bioequivalence, effectiveness, and safety of generics to improve prescriber confidence. Furthermore, increasing patient awareness and addressing economic factors are crucial for the wider adoption of generics. By fostering better understanding and communication about generics, both healthcare professionals and patients can benefit from reduced healthcare costs while maintaining therapeutic standards.

Keywords: Generic Drugs, Prescription Practices, Bioequivalence, Healthcare Professionals, Patient Adherence.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Generic drugs have gained increasing prominence in modern therapeutic strategies, offering a cost-effective alternative to brand-name medications. Despite their well-documented benefits, their acceptance and utilization remain contentious, particularly in hospital settings where prescriber confidence and patient adherence are crucial factors. The perception of healthcare professionals plays a pivotal role in determining prescription patterns, which in turn influence healthcare expenditure and patient access to essential treatments [1].

In Morocco, the promotion of generic drugs has been a key component of national healthcare policies aimed at improving access to affordable medications. The country has established a legal and regulatory framework to ensure the quality, safety, and efficacy of generics, aligning with international standards [2]. However, despite these efforts, the prescription and use of generics remain relatively low compared to other countries. Several factors contribute to this situation, including the perception among healthcare professionals that generics may be less effective than brand-name drugs, as well as a lack of awareness among patients regarding their benefits.

While generic drugs are rigorously evaluated for bioequivalence to their reference counterparts, concerns persist regarding their therapeutic interchangeability, particularly for medications with a narrow therapeutic index. Some prescribers remain skeptical due to differences in excipients, formulation, and potential variations in patient response. These concerns can create barriers to the widespread adoption of generics, limiting their potential impact on healthcare cost reduction [3].

Assessing the practices and opinions of prescribers regarding generic drugs in Morocco is therefore critical. Understanding the factors influencing their attitudes can help identify the main obstacles to adoption, such as misinformation, regulatory constraints, or institutional policies. Additionally, targeted educational initiatives and policy reforms may enhance confidence in generics and encourage their integration into standard treatment protocols. By addressing these challenges, the Moroccan healthcare system can maximize the economic and clinical benefits of generic drug utilization while maintaining high standards of patient care [4].

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted from January 1 to January 30, 2025, among healthcare professionals in Morocco. The study aimed to analyze the perception of healthcare professionals regarding generic drugs and assess their impact on prescription practices in the

hospital setting. The study was conducted anonymously, ensuring the confidentiality of participants responses.

The target population consisted of 94 licensed physicians, both in the private and public sectors. These participants were selected through an exhaustive sampling method, where physicians practicing in both sectors were contacted via social media addresses and email. The study used a Google Forms questionnaire, which was pre-established and validated, for data collection.

The overall sample included 94 physicians, including both practicing doctors in the public and private sectors. The study focused on their perspectives on generic drugs and prescription practices. Regarding the study design, the research was based on a declarative and anonymous mode of data collection. The collected data were entered into Microsoft Office Excel 2019 for statistical analysis.

Ethical considerations were prioritized by ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, along with providing clear information about the purpose and nature of the study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Perception of Physicians :

➤ Perception of the Properties of Generic Drugs :

Our results show that **55% of physicians condition their recommendation of generics on the guarantee of bioequivalence**. This figure highlights a persistent mistrust regarding the effectiveness of generics, despite rigorous studies proving their equivalence with brand-name drugs. This skepticism is often attributed to a lack of detailed information on bioequivalence evaluation criteria, a concern raised in several international studies [5]. It is important to note that this distrust may also be influenced by clinical experiences where pharmacokinetic variations have been observed, especially for drugs with a narrow therapeutic index (e.g., antiepileptics, immunosuppressants), as discussed by other researchers [6].

➤ Bioequivalence and Clinical Effectiveness :

Nearly **49% of physicians** question the clinical effectiveness of generics, despite evidence of their bioequivalence. This suggests that practitioners differentiate between pharmacokinetic parameters and the actual therapeutic response. Studies indicate that factors such as patient adherence, the placebo effect, and the perception of medications directly influence clinical effectiveness [7]. This aligns with the findings in the **European Journal of Clinical Pharmacology (2022)**, which highlights how healthcare professionals' beliefs about the effectiveness of generics can shape prescribing practices.

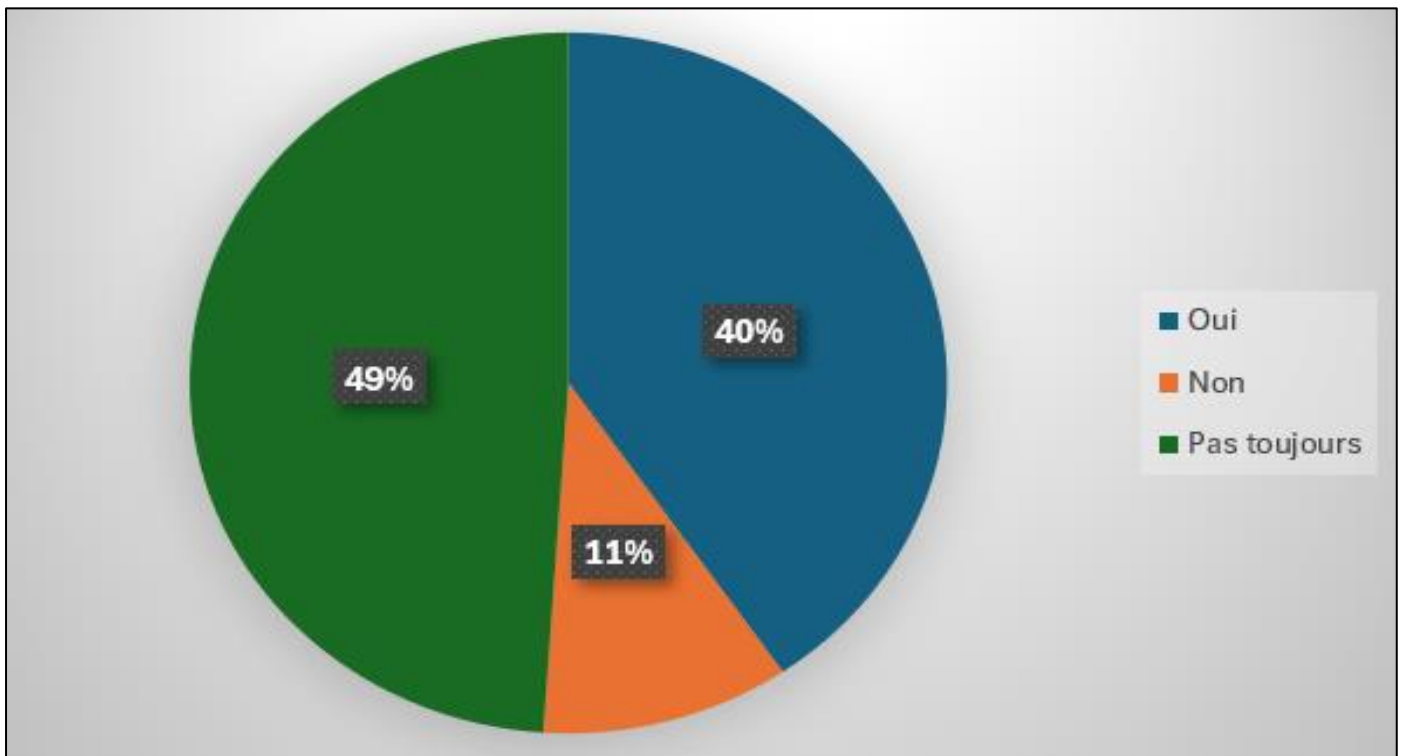


Fig 1 Bioequivalence as a Guarantee of the Clinical Effectiveness of Generic Drugs according to the Participants.

➤ *Perceived Differences Between Generics and Brand-Name Drugs :*

The analysis of responses reveals that 70% of physicians perceive generics as **sometimes** less effective than brand-name drugs, with 19% considering them **often** less effective. These figures reflect significant reluctance toward generics, which may be explained by clinical experiences reporting interindividual variability and differences in excipients that

could influence patient tolerance. However, 11% of physicians perceive **no difference**, suggesting a gradual acceptance of generics in hospital practice. This is in line with findings from the Journal of Generic Medicines (2023), which noted that, over time, more physicians are integrating generics into their prescription practices, although challenges remain.

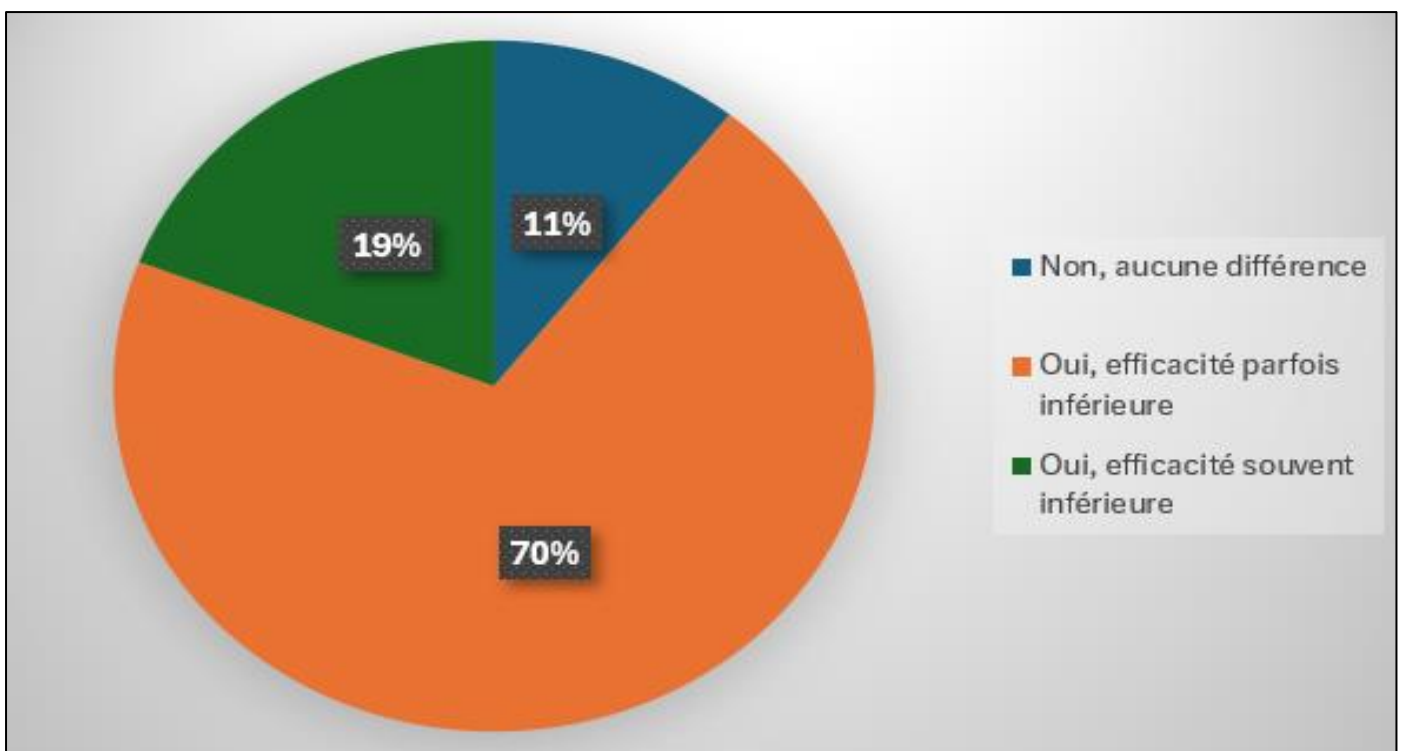


Fig 2 Effectiveness Differences between Generic and Brand-Name Drugs according to the Participants.

➤ *Recommendation and Prescription of Generics :*

Despite reservations, **81% of physicians** regularly recommend generics. This is an encouraging result, indicating a progressive adoption of generics in hospital practices. However, the **15% of practitioners who rarely** or **5% who never recommend them** underline the need for further improvement in communication and training on the

bioequivalence and effectiveness of generics. Regarding prescription frequency, **40% of physicians** prescribe generics in **20% to 50%** of cases, while **30%** prescribe them in **up to 75%** of cases. This moderate integration of generics into hospital prescriptions reflects the influence of institutional guidelines and prescribing habits.

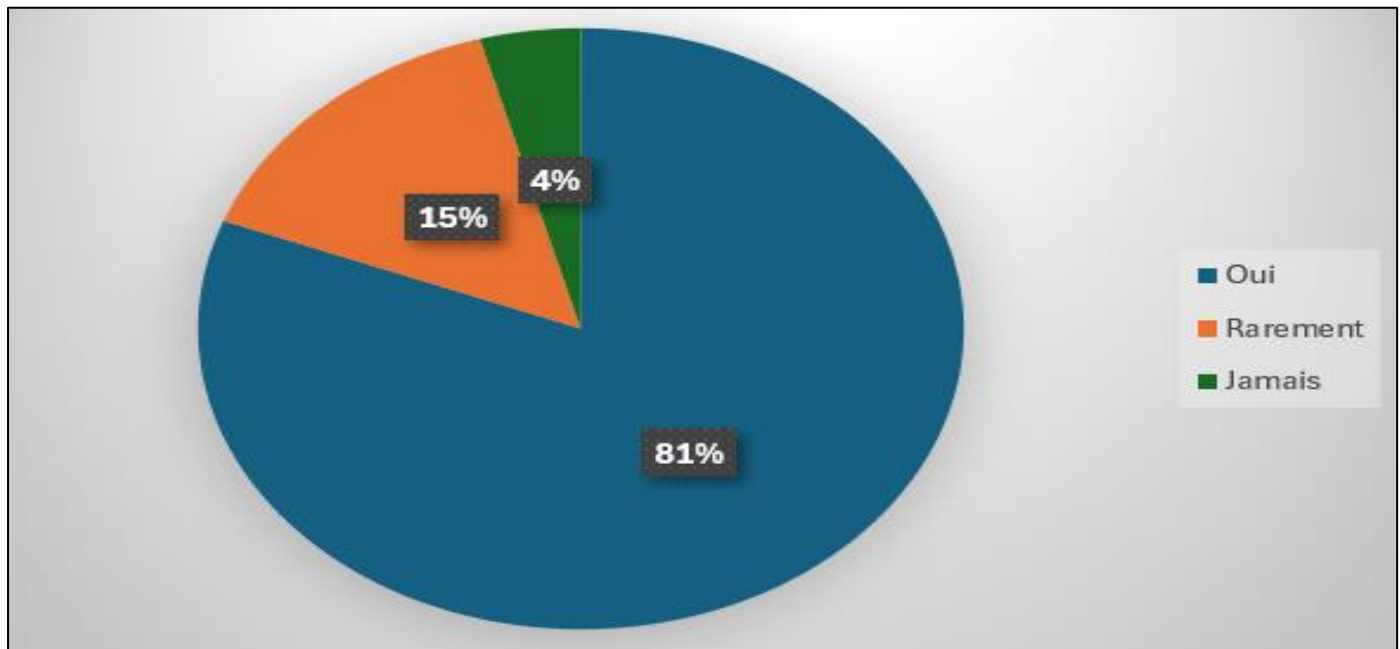


Fig 3 Physicians Preferences for Generic Drugs in Prescriptions.

➤ *Access to Information and Promotion of Generics :*

More than half of physicians (**55%**) express partial satisfaction with the available information on generics, indicating that while information is accessible, it is still insufficient to address healthcare professionals' concerns. The primary sources of information are **medical representatives (40%)**, **specialized pharmacology websites (30%)**, and **scientific journals (25%)**. This

highlights the strong influence of the pharmaceutical industry on physicians' knowledge about generics, which is a pattern also observed in other countries. Therefore, the need for independent, evidence-based resources is crucial. Promoting transparency and accessibility of clinical studies, including pharmacovigilance data, could further reinforce the confidence of prescribers in generics [8].

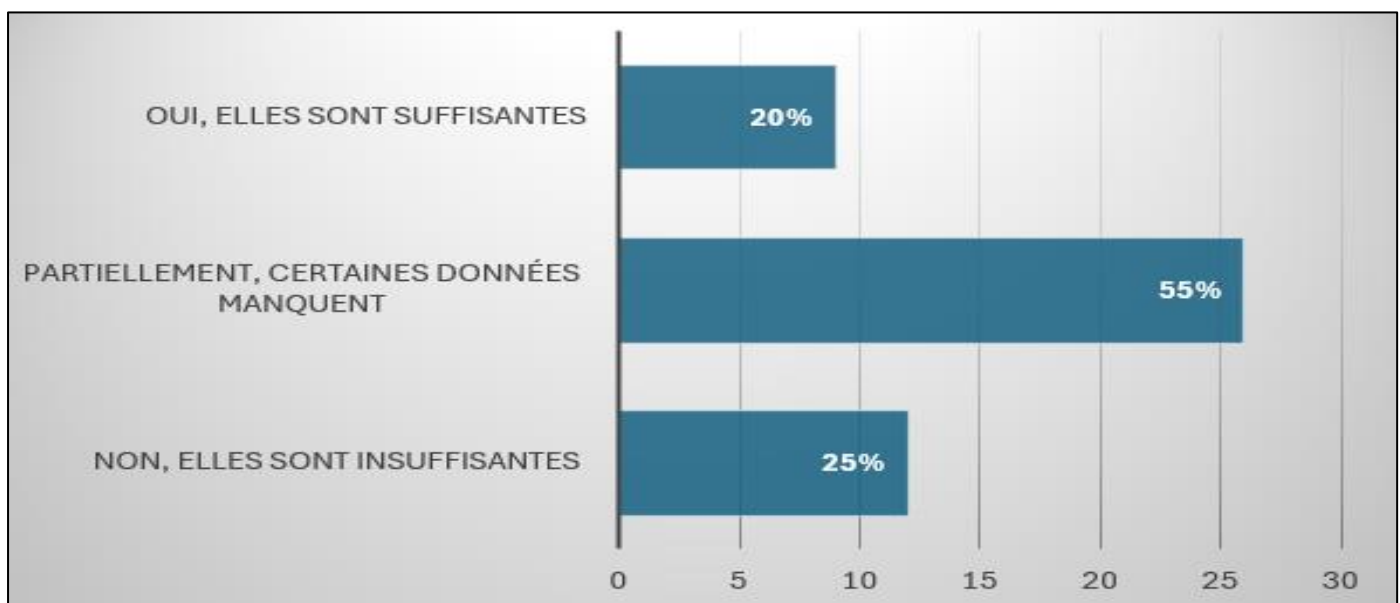


Fig 4 Participants' Satisfaction Rate Regarding the Available Information on Generics.

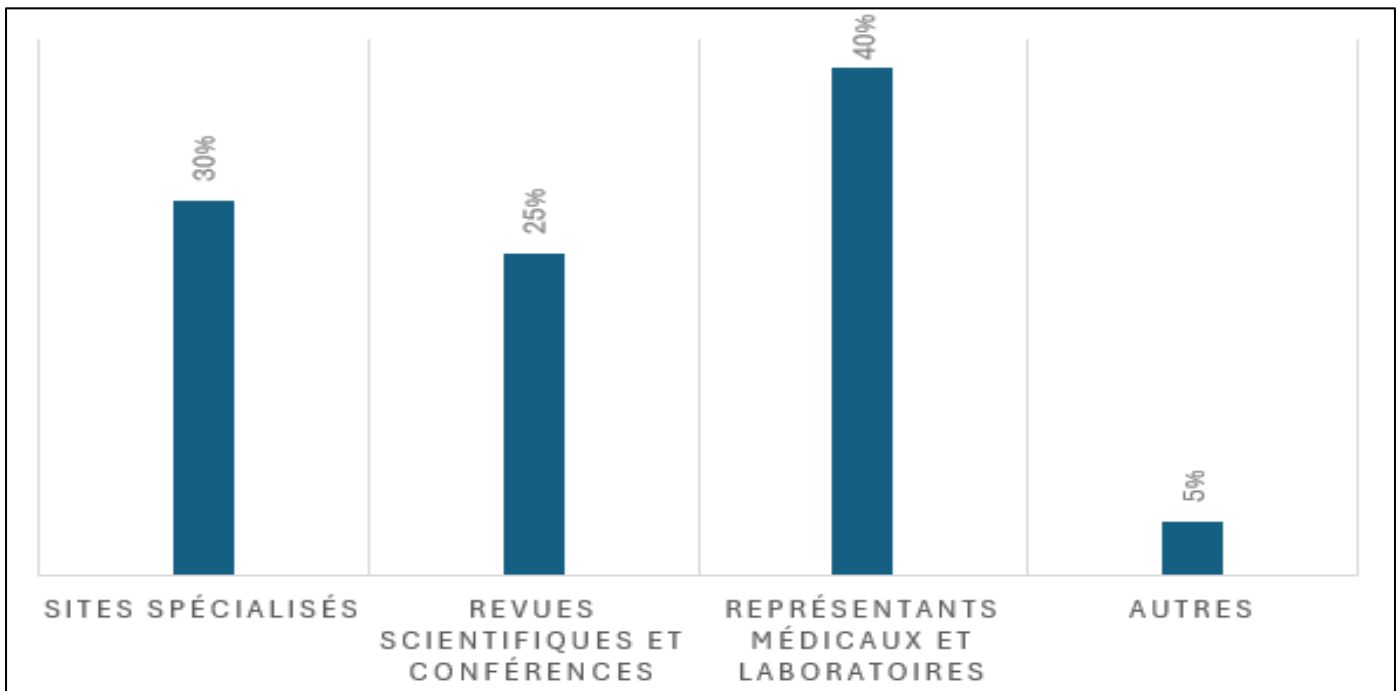


Fig 5 Sources of Information used by Participants regarding Generic Drugs.

B. Patients Perception as Reported by Healthcare Professionals:

➤ Acceptance of Generics by Patients :

Our study reveals that **price is the primary factor influencing patients' acceptance of generics**. This finding aligns with other studies indicating that patients, particularly those without health insurance, are more likely to choose generics due to their lower cost [9]. Patients with modest incomes and those without medical coverage are the most favorable to generics, a trend that highlights the economic role of generics in improving access to medications. This is consistent with findings from the International Journal of Health Economics , which reports that the adoption of generics is more widespread in lower-income populations.

➤ Influence of Perception on Adherence :

Despite the lower cost of generics, some patients remain hesitant to use them due to negative perceptions, influenced by media or a lack of information from healthcare professionals. This mistrust can affect therapeutic adherence, particularly when patients doubt the quality or effectiveness of substituted treatments. This issue has been widely discussed in literature, with some studies showing that patient adherence is influenced by perceptions of medication quality, regardless of the price [10]. To build patient trust, the role of healthcare professionals is crucial in explaining the rigorous testing and bioequivalence standards that generics undergo.

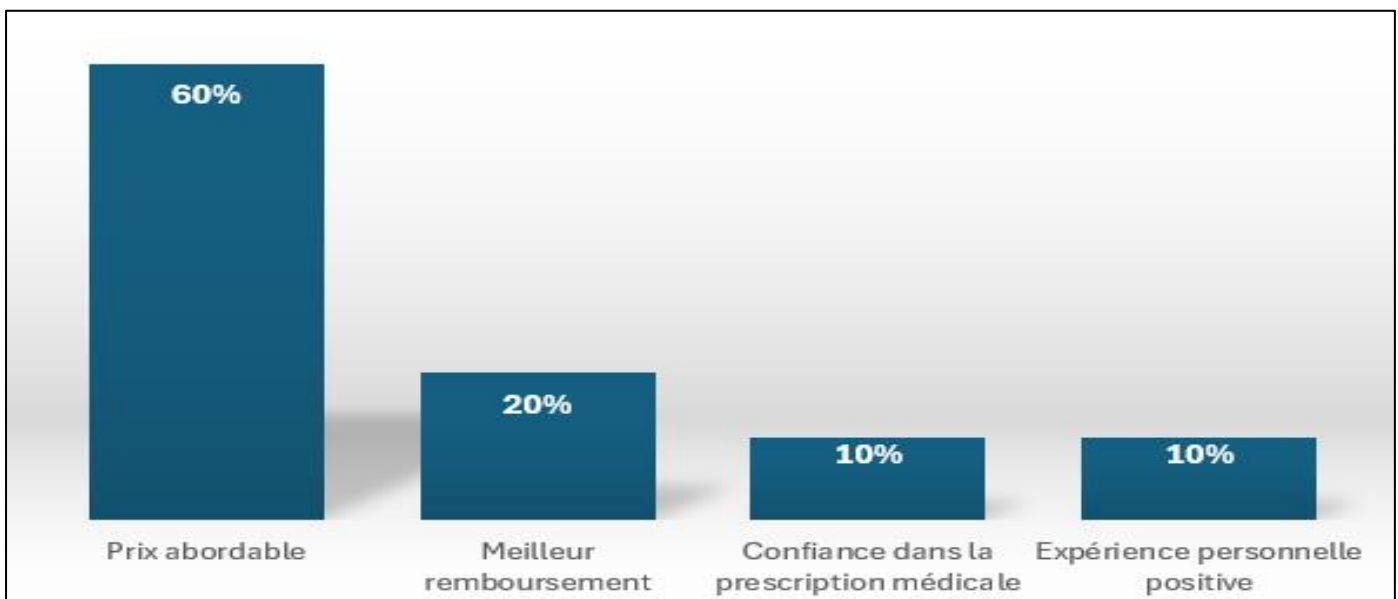


Fig 6 Reasons for Patient Acceptance of Generic Drugs according to the Participants.

➤ *Profiles of Patients Most Favorable to Generics :*

Our findings confirm that patients with **lower incomes** and those without **social coverage** are most inclined to use generics, aligning with global trends showing that generics play a key role in reducing healthcare access inequalities. However, treatment choices should not be dictated solely by financial constraints. **Reimbursement policies** integrating generics into national healthcare coverage would help normalize their use across all socioeconomic categories, a strategy recommended by the **World Health Organization Report on Medicines Accessibility (2023)**.

IV. CONCLUSION

The results of this study highlight a contrasting perception of generic drugs among hospital prescribers. While their use is becoming increasingly widespread, certain reservations persist, particularly regarding their clinical effectiveness and bioequivalence. These concerns are fueled by a lack of information and variable clinical experiences, underscoring the need to strengthen healthcare professionals' training.

Among patients, the acceptance of generics is primarily motivated by economic reasons, confirming their crucial role in improving access to care. However, to encourage broader adoption, it is essential to enhance communication about the quality and effectiveness guarantees of generics through training and awareness initiatives.

Finally, while some practitioners perceive generics as a hindrance to innovation, their economic impact paradoxically supports research and development of new treatments. A balanced policy between integrating generics and funding pharmaceutical innovation remains essential to optimize healthcare access and encourage therapeutic advancements.

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