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European head of Teva calls for regular inspection of Chinese and Indian drug manufacturing sites  
by Helen Collis

CANNES, June 8 (APM) - The European head of the world's largest generics company Teva has called for the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to regularly inspect manufacturing plants in countries such as China and India and impose the same strict quality controls as in European countries.

Dr Gerard Van Odijk, president and CEO of Teva Europe, told APM he was lobbying the EMA for vigorous and frequent inspections to improve the quality of products, particularly generics, reaching the market.

Van Odijk was speaking on the sidelines of the European wholesalers association (GIRP) conference in Cannes on Tuesday.

Earlier, he told the conference why he preferred to use manufacturing sites such as those in Hungary rather than factories in China or India.

Van Odijk said maintaining high levels of quality was a greater issue to him than maintaining higher prices.

He said some tablet ingredients are sourced from a factory in China and made into tablets in India before proceeding to the UK for labelling. These tablets then enter the market as a UK product and sold for less than 50 euro cents.

"That's a totally unacceptable control mechanism," said Van Odijk. "We don't do that with kids' toys but with medicine, we seem to accept strange behaviours on quality."

#### EMA DAWN RAIDS

While Van Odijk said he had no evidence that the quality of products manufactured in India and China was lower than elsewhere, he told APM Teva was lobbying the EMA to carry out dawn raids on factories in these countries, in the same way they are carried out on sites in Europe.

"I'm a big advocate of sending the EMA out to India and China. They need to be ready every day. It will bring up the quality of standards and make it a level playing field. That will make price a factor," said Van Odijk.

#### TEVA FACTORIES

Speaking to APM, Van Odijk conceded that Teva does use manufacturing sites in countries like India and China, but he could not say what proportion of Teva's products are made at these sites, but said it was a "small amount".

He said; "If we source from them, we send our own audit teams in frequently. We never take products from outside without having a full audit done."

However, Van Odijk added: "We believe that shouldn't be down to the individual company doing this, it should be globally regulated."

#### TENDERS

On the subject of tenders in Europe, Van Odijk said these were driving down prices to "ridiculously low" levels. While he agreed that prices need to be protected, he stressed that ensuring the high quality of the drugs is first and foremost the most important issue.

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#### **Helen Collis**

Reporter

APM Health Europe

0207 324 2327

[www.apmhealthurope.com](http://www.apmhealthurope.com)