

## Another sneaky and illogical tax

MANY people may not be aware of a sneaky little stroke introduced some time ago by the government via the Medicines Board that places an extra tax on anybody purchasing a branded medicine instead of a generic drug that is included on a list issued by the Medicines Board.

Last week, a reader went to his pharmacist to purchase a medicine that costs €36 per month. A cheaper generic supply is available and on the list but, when our reader decided to opt for the brand item for personal reasons, he was charged an extra €13 on top of the €36!

He was not a medical-card holder paying €2.50 per prescription, he was a private customer paying the full retail price.

The extra charge also applies to people on the Drugs Payment Schemes that limits the amount paid by a person every month to €144.

To load an extra €13 on top of an already inflated price as an extra tax is totally illogical and if the same principle was applied across the board, people would have to be taxed further if they decided to purchase more expensive clothing, cars and housing.

“Sorry Sir, that shirt costs €50 but we have cheaper ones at €10 that are every bit as functional so I’ll have to charge you €15 extra, so that will be €65 please”

Imagine, if a sales assistant said that to you in a shop? You would think it bonkers and the same applies to the medicine issue.

And, of course, the irony is that many of the medicines we purchase in this country can be obtained far cheaper in other EU states. In other words, we are being ripped off a second time.

There is a possible get-out clause for people who really do need a particular, branded product. If your doctor writes ‘Do Not Substitute’ on the prescription, you do not have to pay the extra tax.

However, that appears to put unfair pressure on GPs and I don’t know how they are reacting to that situation.