

THE DEMONOPOLIZATION OF PHARMACEUTICALS IN SWEDEN

Policy, actors and arguments

ABSTRACT

This chapter analyses the regulation of pharmaceuticals in Sweden, with special emphasis on the demonopolization of retail trade in 2009 and the actors and arguments involved in the process. It shows how differences in ideologies and values affect policy outcomes and create different possibilities to organize the market. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the implications of the regulatory changes and how the changes to the organization of Swedish pharmacies have affected ordinary citizens. It is concluded that the regulation of pharmaceuticals has received much political debate in Sweden, but that the issue has nonetheless been hard to resolve. Over time there has been a shift in argumentation from a non-acceptance of profits and an emphasis on safe pharmaceuticals management in the 1970s to the current profit thinking with a view to increasing efficiency, availability and service standards. The Hanner case acted as a catalyst in a period when neither of the political blocs were interested in putting a reformation of pharmacies on the political agenda. The new system has so far improved availability. Expectations of lower prices and greater customer satisfaction have not been met in the same manner.

KEYWORDS: Pharmaceuticals, Apoteket, regulation, policy, Sweden