

## Brazilian Pharmacy Program Lowers Drugs' Price by Up to 90%

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Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva says that the expansion of the "Farmácia Popular" (a network of state-run pharmacies) to 1,200 privately-owned pharmacies under a partnership agreement will be "a historical landmark in the history of healthcare in Brazil." The new pharmacies open this Friday, March 24.

According to the Ministry of Health, by associating with commercial pharmacies the Farmácia Popular will be able to provide consumers with medicines with price reductions of up to 90%.

That will be important for low-income people with hypertension and diabetes, especially. The ministry estimates that some 11.5 million people will be directly benefited.

The ministry says that there are estimated 16.8 million Brazilians over the age of 40 with hypertension and that 7.7 million of them are enrolled in the Unified Health System SUS - which is state-run and free to the public - meaning that they get free drugs.

As for diabetes, it is estimated that there are 5 million people with the disease. Out of that number 2.6 million are enrolled in the SUS.

The pharmacies will operate under a "co-participation system," in which the government will foot most of the bill for medicines (varying from 50% to 90%).

### Pharmacy Industry in Favor

The ability to sell drugs at a low price in commercial pharmacies is a positive advance in the country's healthcare system, says the pharmaceutical trade association (Federação Brasileira da Indústria Farmacêutica) (Febrafarma).

And with the integration of commercial pharmacies and the state-run Farmácia Popular, people who formerly were unable to buy drugs will be directly benefited.

"This is a measure that dovetails with the industry's objectives. We believe we do have a social function. We follow economic logic as we strive to expand the consumer market (where millions of Brazilians are excluded)," declared a Febrafarma spokesperson.

Febrafarma added that it sees a place in the future of the drug market for endeavors such as Farmácia Popular "capable of generating multiple benefits for the population in terms of health and quality of life, as well as expanding the market, increasing competitiveness and knowledge."

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