

Take Five

October 1, 2000 By Staff

In May, UNAIDS urged five companies to say they'd cut the prices of anti-HIV drugs in poor countries. After many press releases (and even more free publicity), few additional details have been released. A brief look at the facts and possible pitfalls:

Boehringer-Ingelheim, Germany

Price Tag: TBA

Active Ingredients: Five years of free nevirapine, but only to prevent mom-to-babe transmission. Countries must ask for the drug and meet the World Bank's definition of a developing nation in order to avoid any coloniastic overtones.

Warning: But hey, it only covers mothers and kids using the drug, not other HIVers.

Bristol-Meyers Squibb, U.S.

Price Tag: \$100 mil over five years (started in 99)

Active Ingredients: "Secure the Future" program targets women and children in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, and Swaziland; generally credited with setting a good example for other drug companies.

Warning: Locals say that they want more community initiatives and lower drug prices, not phsician trainings and clinical trials.

Glaxo Wellcome, Great Britain

Price Tag: TBA

Active Ingredients: Price cuts for Combivir, from \$16 to \$2 per day in developing nations, and a free start-up supply of AZT for pregnant women.

Warning: Activists say even \$2 is more than the 40 cents it costs to make the drug generically. And once the initial cache of AZT is used, moms will have to pay, too.

Merck & Co., INC., US

Price Tag: \$50 mil

Active Ingredients: The Gates Foundation will match the donation to improve medical infrastructure in Botswana. Crixivan and Sustiva will be offered free in 2001.

Warning: We're waiting to find out how many people will get the drugs.

Roche Labs, Switzerland

Price Tag: TBA

Active Ingredients: Countries to provide Fortovase, Ivirase, and Vireaccept at a reduced

(undisclosed) cost in some nations, say reps.

Warning: No other details had been released at press time.

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