UNITAID to Push for Lower HIV Med Prices

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UNITAID, the international agency created in 2006 to buy medicines to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria across the globe, is endorsing the creation of a panel focused on lowering drug prices in developing countries, reports *The New York Times* (nytimes.com, 7/8).

The panel would oversee what the agency calls a "patent pool," which would hold licenses on patented medicines so that the drugs could be manufactured cheaper and be made available in poorer countries. The initial aim of the pool would be to produce antiretroviral medications for HIV-positive infants and adults who have developed resistance to first-line medications. The latter is often unable to afford newer, second-generation drugs.

The *Times* reports that the panel would at first have a budget of less than $2 million and have only five patent law experts. "The panel might ask for licenses on second-generation drugs," said James Love, an advocate for lower drug prices. "The patent holders will either say yes or no—but if they say no, it might raise some eyebrows."

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