Is Pharma Making the Grade?

September 14, 2009 By Peter Staley

The AIDS Treatment Activists Coalition (ATAC), of which I'm a member, issued report cards on the nine major pharmaceutical companies with HIV drugs on the market, and most aren't exactly graduating with honors (the average grade was C-minus).

ATAC graded each company on drug development, pricing, access to medications (often through things like drug co-pay programs), marketing, and whether the companies give the community the opportunity to influence how they run their clinical trials. Each company was also given an aggregate grade.

We praised companies like Merck and Tibotec for the way they do business, giving both the highest grade handed out (a B, although I actually thought Merck deserved an A-minus), while taking Roche and Abbott to task for various poor policies (Abbott got a much deserved F for its Norvir pricing fiasco).

The New York Times ran a great story in its business section last week covering the report card release.

What will hopefully come through loud and clear is that while we're very grateful for the life-saving meds that pharma has produced, and we acknowledge that progress in HIV has been stellar compared to many other diseases, we're far from done.

The drugs were never designed or priced to be taken life-long, and we need pharma to work closely with the community to ensure that progress toward something better than daily-treatment-for-life becomes a reality in the not-to-distant future.

Below is the summary report card. More detailed reports can be found on ATAC's website.

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