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Hepatitis C: Doctors of the World Opposes Patent for Sofosbuvir (Sovaldi)
- A European First Promotes Millions of People's Access to Hepatitis C Treatment -

NEW YORK, NY (February 10, 2015) – In a European first, Doctors of the World today filed its opposition to the patent granted for the new hepatitis C treatment sofosbuvir with the European Patent Office (EPO).

For several months, Doctors of the World and other organizations have been warning of the problems posed by the cost of new treatments for hepatitis C, and of sofosbuvir in particular. Gilead Sciences holds a monopoly for sofosbuvir and is marketing a 12-week treatment at an exorbitant price – anywhere from \$84,000 to \$168,000 in the US – thereby hindering many people's access to the drug.

Opposition to the patent, if successful, is likely to encourage competition from generic versions of sofosbuvir,¹ costing as little as US \$100. While using sofosbuvir to treat hepatitis C represents a major therapeutic advance, the molecule itself, which is the result of work by many public and private researchers, is not sufficiently innovative to warrant a patent.

Because Gilead is using its patent to impose prices that are unsustainable for healthcare systems, Doctors of the World - Médecins du Monde is contesting it. This is the first time in Europe that a medical NGO has contested a patent to improve patient access to drugs.

“Gilead's current pricing has the potential to wreck insurers and healthcare systems alike,” said Miranda Sissons, executive director of Doctors of the World USA. “By opposing this patent, we're seeking to help millions of people gain access to the life-changing treatment they need.”

¹ Hill A, van de Ven N, Simmons B, et al. Minimum target prices for production of treatment and associated diagnostics for Hepatitis C in developing countries (Abstract LBPE12). Presented at the 20th International AIDS Conference; 2014 July 20–25; Melbourne, Australia.

In December 2014, the Philadelphia transportation authority lodged a class action lawsuit against Gilead Sciences, arguing that the drug's pricing represents an abuse of Gilead's patent monopoly and violates federal antitrust laws.

About Hepatitis C

Sofosbuvir is a highly effective direct-acting antiviral (DAA) used in the treatment of hepatitis C. In the US, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that 4.4 million people are infected with hepatitis C. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), an estimated 130 to 150 million individuals are chronic carriers of hepatitis C worldwide.

Doctors of the World

Doctors of the World USA is a US non-profit that is part of the global Médecins du Monde network. It provides emergency and long-term medical care to vulnerable people, while fighting for equal access to healthcare worldwide. Founded in France in 1980, the network cares for the most vulnerable through 350 programs in 79 countries, including in the United States.

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