

Abbott Criticizes Brazil's Move to Copy Company's HIV/AIDS Drug

Posted Tuesday, June 28, 2005 :: infoZine Staff

By **Nadezhda Pitulova** - Abbott Laboratories said Monday that Brazil's decision to ignore the company's patent on an anti-AIDS and HIV drug will threaten patients' health and that the company cannot sell the drug for any less than the current, deeply discounted price.

Washington, D.C. - Scripps Howard Foundation Wire - *infoZine* - The Brazilian government on Friday threatened to break the patent on one of Abbott Laboratories' drugs, according to a Bloomberg report.

Abbott Laboratories has 10 days from Friday to lower the price.

Abbott has exported Kaletra (also called Lopinavir or Ritonavir) to Brazil for many years at \$1.20 per drug unit. Brazil's embassy here says the price needs to be reduced to 63 cents to continue its existence on the Brazilian pharmaceutical market.

Meanwhile, the bill proposed in the lower house of the Brazilian legislature June 1, recognizing imported anti-AIDS and anti-HIV drugs as "not patentable," has not yet been approved.

"Under Abbott's agreement with the Brazilian Ministry of Health, Brazil receives Kaletra for the lowest price in the world," the Abbott company said in a statement.

In 2002 Abbott laboratories began exporting Kaletra to Brazil at \$1.60 per unit. Over the last three years, it has lowered the price by up to 25 percent, to \$1.20 a unit.

"The Brazilian government can produce the same drug for 63 cents," said Flavio Marega, Brazil's counselor for trade policy, in an interview Monday.

Brazil has not developed an equivalent to Abbott's Kaletra, and will instead manufacture a generic drug.

"Without innovation and new therapies, in the end it is patients who will lose," the Abbott statement said.

Marega pointed out that Abbott sells the same medication to sub-Saharan African countries for 22 cents per unit, "so there is still a margin to lower the price," Marega added.

Abbott's statement said, however, that the African price for Kaletra is a part of a humanitarian program designated by the United Nations: "Through that program, Abbott Access, the company offers its tests and treatments at a price that represents a financial loss to the company."

Abbott Laboratory's statement also said that breaking the patent and stopping the import of Abbott's HIV and AIDS medications will mean a "significant consequence for patients," who can develop viral resistance when taking alternative formulations of AIDS or HIV medications.

Slavi Pachovski, president of the Institute for Trade, Standards and Sustainable development who headed a U.S. delegation to Brazil to discuss the bill that the Brazilian legislature proposed earlier this month, said, "Many people in Brazil are deeply aware of the fact that taxes they collect on the imported drugs are higher than the money they spent on the AIDS program."

Abbott said the company "remains willing to work with the government to find a mutually agreeable solution."

Article link: <http://www.infozine.com/news/stories/op/storiesView/sid/8701/>

[Close Window](#) | [Print this page](#)

ISSN 1082-7315 - © 1994-2005 INFOZINE ® A REGISTERED TRADEMARK.
infoZine ® is generously hosted by KCServers.com.

