

European Drug Companies Lead 'Access to Medicine Index'

Independent Ranking Shows More Transparency, More Programs for Low-income Countries

AMSTERDAM (June 21, 2010) - European pharmaceutical companies outcompete their U.S. counterparts in making medicines available to people in developing countries, but their lead is shrinking, according to the second Access to Medicine Index, released today.

Compared to 2008, when the first Index was published, pharma companies have given more insight into their policies and actions to increase people's access to medicines in developing countries, researchers say in a report underpinning the ranking. They identify more industry initiatives than two years ago, but also see room for improvement.

"The Access to Medicine Index independently assesses how individual pharmaceutical companies perform in promoting universal access to essential medicines, and is thus an important tool in improving performance," said Dr Carissa Etienne, Assistant Director-General at the World Health Organization (WHO).

"The 2010 ranking reveals important progress, if only because companies have shown far greater willingness to open up. The Index unveils great improvements, especially in the areas of research and development, and equitable pricing. At the same time, it shows that the industry as a whole still has a long way to go," said Wim Leereveld, the Index's founder.

The Access to Medicine Index ranks 20 of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies on their efforts to make sure that medicines are made for, and reach, people in developing countries. The Index encourages drug companies to compete and offers investors and others a way to compare their social responsibility records.

The Access to Medicine Index 2010 identifies GlaxoSmithKline (U.K.) as current industry leader in improving access to needed medicines. Following in its footsteps are Merck & Co. (U.S.), Novartis (Switzerland), Gilead Sciences (U.S.), and Sanofi-Aventis (France).

Gilead Sciences (U.S.) and Pfizer (U.S.) moved up strongly in the ranking; Bayer (Germany), Bristol-Myers Squibb (U.S.), Merck KGaA (Germany) and Novo Nordisk (Denmark) were down.

In the Index 2010, six of the ten highest-ranking originator companies are based in Europe, while four are U.S.-based. Two years ago, seven European companies got a top-10 ranking.

Also, generic drug makers, who do less research but produce low-cost off-patent drugs, now have a separate ranking. Ranbaxy Laboratories (India) and Cipla (India) top that list.

The Access to Medicine Index was created by the Access to Medicine Foundation, a Netherlands-based non-profit, and was researched by RiskMetrics ESG Analytics, part of MSCI Inc., a global provider of investment decision support tools.

Note to reporters: for more information or interview requests, see www.atmindex.org or contact Sue-Lane Wood at tel: +31.62.888.8965, E-mail: slwood@atmindex.org.