

The Guardian compara danos do Antraz com os do HIV

A possível quebra da patente do antibiótico Cipro nos EUA será considerada pelos países em desenvolvimento uma grande hipocrisia, diz Sarah Left, do jornal londrino The Guardian, reproduzido pelo site Global Press. “Durante a briga entre os grandes laboratórios e países como a África do Sul e o Brasil, em torno dos preços dos remédios anti-Aids, os EUA ficaram do lado das companhias farmacêuticas. E a Aids é uma ameaça à saúde pública muito maior e muito mais real que o antraz.

Enquanto nove pessoas contraíram os males produzidos pelo antraz nos EUA, e uma morreu, a Organização Mundial da Saúde diz que 250 mil sul-africanos morreram em consequência da Aids em 1999. O Brasil estima que quase 600 mil de seus cidadãos têm o vírus HIV.

Agora com a ameaça do bioterrorismo nos EUA e o temor de que o Cipro, o único remédio eficaz contra o antraz, venha a faltar na América do Norte, depois do Canadá, já tem senador americano defendendo a quebra da patente do medicamento fabricado pela Bayer para que seja produzido um genérico dele”.

Leia o texto original do The Guardian

Row looming over anthrax drug patent

Sarah Left

Guardian Unlimited

Concerns over the availability of anthrax antibiotic Cipro in North America are heading towards the type of patent row last seen when developing nations challenged pharmaceutical companies over the price of Aids drugs.

Last week, Canadian health minister Allan Rock, announced that his government would override the Cipro patent held by German pharmaceutical company, Bayer, and order almost one million tablets of a generic version of the drug.

He said that while Canada was probably not a target for a biological attack, he had awarded a contract to produce the generic version of Bayer's ciprofloxacin to Canadian firm Apotex in order to fill gaps in the national stockpile of anti-anthrax drugs in case of an emergency.

Officials from Bayer, angry at the move to bypass a patent that does not expire in Canada until 2004, said they are seeking talks with the Canadian government. They have not said if they will sue the government.

In the US, at least one senator is pushing for his government to follow Canada's lead. New York senator Charles Schumer believes that having enough Cipro on hand would calm the nation's fears over a widespread anthrax attack.

On his website, Mr Schumer argued: “Bayer's ability to produce sufficient amounts of Cipro is

questionable and, as the drug's sole patent holder, Bayer charges approximately 50% more than what the generic version is likely to cost."

Bayer denies that it is unable to produce Cipro in sufficient quantity, and Mr Schumer acknowledges that while the US can override a drug patent, the action could see the government successfully sued by Bayer for compensation.

The drug companies have been here before, and over a much larger and more real health threat. Earlier this year 39 pharmaceutical companies abandoned a lawsuit against South Africa after that government said it would manufacture cheaper, domestic versions of Aids drugs.

This month, British drugs firm GlaxoSmithKline voluntarily waived its patent rights to give a South African firm the right to produce a generic version of three of its Aids drugs. In September, a Swiss pharmaceutical company Roche slashed the price of the Aids drugs it sells in Brazil by 40%.

While nine people in the US have contracted anthrax, and one has died, the World Health Organisation said that 250,000 in South Africa died of HIV/Aids-related illnesses in 1999. Brazil estimates that nearly 600,000 of its citizens are currently HIV positive.

The US backed the rights of the drug companies throughout the argument over Aids drug patents, and no doubt, the developing world will see any move to override a Cipro patent in the US as deeply hypocritical.

Ironically, medical experts are concerned that the popularity of Cipro will backfire, as people who are not infected with anthrax make themselves immune to the drug's effectiveness by taking it out of fear of contracting the disease.

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