



IDSA

Infectious Diseases Society of America



hiv medicine association

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September 8, 2015

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Dear Mr. Evegan and Mr. Bernier:

We are writing on behalf of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) to urge Turing Pharmaceuticals to immediately revise the pricing strategy for the recently acquired drug pyrimethamine and to address distribution issues that are disrupting access to this generic medication used in the prevention and treatment of opportunistic infections.

IDSA represents more than 10,000 infectious diseases physicians and scientists devoted to patient care, prevention, public health, education and research. Our members care for patients of all ages with serious infections. Within IDSA, HIVMA represents more than 5,000 clinicians and researchers on the front lines of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

In mid-August, after Turing purchased pyrimethamine, the price of the medication increased by 5000 percent¹ in hospital pharmacies around the country with no justification for an increase of this magnitude for a medication approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 1953.¹ In addition, hospitals, including those with 340B pharmacies, also reported being unable to obtain the medication.

Pyrimethamine is particularly important for the treatment of toxoplasmosis, a parasitic infection that has severe consequences if not effectively treated in pregnant women, patients with HIV infection, cancers and other conditions that compromise the immune system.

¹ The price per tablet is reported to have increased from \$13.50 per tablet to \$750 per tablet.

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has identified toxoplasmosis as one of five neglected parasitic diseases targeted for public health action because of the number of people infected, the severity of the illness and the ability for the condition to be treated.ⁱⁱ

Pyrimethamine is currently part of the recommended first line treatment regimen for toxoplasmosis in HIV-infected patients and is a critical component of most of the alternative regimens, particularly for those with allergies to sulfa agents.ⁱⁱⁱ Under the current pricing structure, it is estimated that the annual cost of treatment for toxoplasmosis, for the pyrimethamine component alone, will be \$336,000 for patients who weigh less than 60 kilograms and \$634,500 for patients who weigh more than 60 kilograms. This cost is unjustifiable for the medically vulnerable patient population in need of this medication and unsustainable for the health care system.

Please help us improve public health by immediately implementing a rational and fair pricing strategy for pyrimethamine that keeps treatment for a potentially fatal condition accessible to our patients. We may be contacted through the HIVMA executive director Andrea Weddle by email at aweddle@hivma.org or phone at (703) 299-0915 to discuss this issue.

Sincerely,



Stephen B. Calderwood, MD, FIDSA
President, IDSA



Adaora Adimora, MD, MPH, FIDSA
Chair, HIVMA

ⁱ AIDSinfo database. Pyrimethamine. Online at:

<https://aidsinfo.nih.gov/drugs/445/pyrimethamine/0/professional> (accessed 9/4/2015).

ⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Neglected Parasitic Infections (NPIs) in the United States. Online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/npi/> (accessed 9/4/2015).

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Guidelines for the Prevention and Treatment of Opportunistic Infections in HIV-Infected Adults and Adolescents. Online at: <https://aidsinfo.nih.gov/guidelines/html/4/adult-and-adolescent-oi-prevention-and-treatment-guidelines/322/toxo> (accessed 9/4/2015).