



Students to University of California Board of Regents: Put patients over profits, drop the patent case.

Activists demand their university stop backing Big Pharma at the expense of patients in India

March 13th, LOS ANGELES, CA - This morning, students across the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) campus demonstrated at the Board of Regents meeting with signs and chants asking the university to drop its patent claim on a life-saving UC developed cancer drug that would bar affordable access to this life-saving drug worldwide.

The demonstration was part of a campaign led by student activists from Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM) and the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) to urge the institution to drop a patent claim filed by UCLA in the Indian High Court for Enzalutamide, also known by its Brand-Name 'Xtandi'.

Students have attended and testified at multiple Board of Regents meetings across the state since May 2017, including [delivering a petition to UC President Janet Napolitano with 3500 signatures](#), urging her leadership in dropping the lawsuit. Students have also met with UCLA administrators to discuss their concerns with no action so far from the President.

"As a UCLA alumna and a UCLA medical student, I'm ashamed to witness the actions of this administration- which so deeply deviate from their espoused commitment to health equity- and even more embarrassed of this pseudo-solution" said Neda Ashtari. "In response to our efforts, UCLA Health has offered to utilize a portion of its Xtandi royalties to create a fund for underserved populations to access the drug. While drug donation can offer temporary aid, it is not a sustainable solution and considering the rising prevalence and chronic nature of prostate cancer, the scale of these drug donations would be woefully inadequate".

Despite having already earned over half a billion US dollars *directly* for the university with the sale of their own rights to the drug, UCLA has been fighting a battle on behalf of the pharmaceutical corporations Pfizer and Astellas by filing a patent with the Indian High Court in Delhi on their behalf. If the patent is granted it would prevent the generic and more affordable production of enzalutamide in India, ultimately preventing access for millions of cancer patients in the country that is known for developing and exporting most of the world's generic medications.



“It is disappointing that UCLA would disregard the consequences of pursuing patent rights that will make life-saving medicines out of reach for many” Avanthi Jayaweera, Education and Advocacy Fellow for AMSA said, “future physicians will not stand on the sidelines as medical schools side with corporations that continue to diminish access to affordable medicines. We are taught to put patients first and we will not break that promise.”

UCLA’s pursuit of patent rights in India also undermines the licensing guidelines adopted by the UC system in 2012 through UAEM advocacy, and which recommend that academic institutions should prioritize unmet geographical and economic need.

“As the leader of a university system that prides itself on its social mission, Janet Napolitano’s lack of empathy for the impact of this case on people’s lives is deeply disturbing, particularly as a cancer survivor herself,” said Merith Basey, Executive Director of UAEM, North America. “Napolitano has an opportunity to set an example for other leading universities, rather than fold to the whims of pharmaceutical corporations. Universities have a responsibility to ensure the drugs developed on their campuses with taxpayer funds are affordable to the people who need them. There is still time to do the right thing and make a decision that will save people’s lives”

The eventual court decision will have great ramifications for the global health community and could inform for better or worse future patent claims and licensing patterns. Students are demanding that the university act with the same moral integrity they expect of their students and calling for the administration to drop the patent claim, lest they set a dangerous precedent of pursuing exclusive patents and blocking generic drug production in India.

They are sending a resounding message to universities, pharmaceutical corporations, and the public in line with UAEM’s refrain that no one should be sick because they are poor or be poor because they are sick.

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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