

Specialty Intelligence Report

A Summary of Specialty-Related News You Can Use

March 20, 2009

NYC, Baltimore Health Commissioners Nominated to Lead FDA

President Obama nominated two city health commissioners, [Margaret Hamburg, M.D.](#), and [Joshua Sharfstein, M.D.](#), for [FDA](#) Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. Hamburg is a bioterrorism expert and serves on the board for [Henry Schein](#), a medical, pharmaceutical, and vaccine distributor. She was New York City's health commissioner for six years, where she successfully controlled an epidemic of multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis. She later joined the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) to create its [bioterrorism initiative](#) and led planning for [pandemic flu response](#). Sharfstein has been Baltimore's health commissioner since 2005, and worked on health issues for [Rep. Henry Waxman](#). ([New England Journal of Medicine](#), [New York Times](#), [Kaiser Daily Health Policy Report](#))

Legislation Introduced to Remove Prompt-Pay Discount

A bipartisan group of House members led by [Rep. Gene Green](#) introduced a [bill](#) last week that would remove the prompt-pay discount extended to wholesalers from manufacturers' average sales price. McKesson and other healthcare companies and organizations say the prompt-pay discount artificially lowers reimbursement rates for oncologists and strongly support the legislation. ([ASCO](#))

Biogenerics Bills Introduced

Two competing, bipartisan bills were introduced this week to lay out a process for approving biogeneric drugs. A [bill](#) from [House Energy and Commerce Committee](#) Chair Henry Waxman would give original brand-name drugs five years of market exclusivity—far below the 14 years biopharmaceutical manufacturers support—and in some cases, an additional three years for modifications to existing drugs and an extension up to one year to study pediatric or new uses. Patent challenges would be frozen during the exclusivity period. A bill introduced by [Joe Barton](#), the ranking member on Waxman's committee, provides 12 years' exclusivity for brand-name biogeneric drugs. ([Reuters](#), [Kaiser](#))

Roche Finally Succeeds with Genentech Buyout

[Genentech](#) accepted [Roche](#)'s final buyout offer for \$46.8 billion, giving Roche full control over the world's most successful biotechnology firm. Roche says it will keep the Genentech name and South San Francisco headquarters. ([San Francisco Business Times](#))

Herceptin® “Significantly” Extended Lives of Stomach Cancer Patients

Roche announced results from a large, international Phase III study of Genentech's [Herceptin](#) that show adding it to standard chemotherapy treatment significantly improved longevity among patients with advanced and inoperable [HER-2](#) positive stomach cancer. Stomach cancer is the second-most common type of cancer-related death worldwide. Full data were not released. (Roche press release)

Blood Type Tied to Pancreatic Cancer Risk

The [Journal of the National Cancer Institute](#) reports that people with blood type O appear to have the lowest risk of developing pancreatic cancer. People with type B are 72% more likely to develop the cancer, those with type AO 51%, and those with type A, 32%. Researchers say this may indicate that a gene on the 9th chromosome that determines blood type may include an inherited risk factor. ([Reuters](#))