



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH &amp; HUMAN SERVICES

Food and Drug Administration  
Rockville MD 20857

NOV 14 2000

The Honorable Bart Stupak  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515-2201

Dear Mr. Stupak:

Thank you for the letter of October 11, 2000, co-signed by seven of your colleagues, to Jane E. Henney, M.D., Commissioner of Food and Drugs, regarding your concerns about the possible link of Accutane (isotretinoin) to severe psychiatric side effects.

In your letter you recommended that a number of measures be implemented regarding Accutane. Please be assured that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA or the Agency) shares your concerns and is committed to moving expeditiously to address the issues that have arisen with this drug product.

As you know, on September 18 and 19, 2000, FDA convened a meeting of the Dermatologic and Ophthalmic Drugs Advisory Committee to further explore the issues of birth defects and psychological adverse events associated with the use of Accutane. While the Committee did not express certainty that a causal relationship exists between Accutane and serious psychological events such as severe depression and suicide, they recognized that the potential for adverse psychiatric events is of substantial concern and called for additional studies. Additionally, the Advisory Committee recommended a Medication Guide for patients to inform them in plain language about the concerns regarding psychiatric events and the use of Accutane. The Committee also recommended use of a consent form for Accutane patients, and expressed concern that physicians prescribing Accutane be properly educated about adverse side effects. Subsequent to the Advisory Committee meeting, FDA has met with representatives of Hoffman-LaRoche to work to implement the Committee's recommendations.

Your letter recommended that all Accutane patients receive and sign an informed consent form warning of the drug's possible psychiatric side effects and that FDA issue a patient Medication

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Guide discussing birth defects and the risk of depression, suicide and other psychiatric disorders. On October 25, 2000, FDA received from Hoffman-LaRoche both a proposed informed consent form and a proposed Medication Guide. These documents are undergoing a multi-disciplinary review in the Agency, and we will provide Hoffmann-La Roche with comments and recommendations by November 16, 2000. We hope that these documents will be ready shortly thereafter for distribution to the public.

You also expressed concern that the labeling of Accutane should provide warnings about birth defects, depression, suicide, and other psychiatric disorders. On October 24, 2000, the Agency met with Hoffmann-La Roche to discuss the voluntary packaging exchange program, which is now underway. This program will help ensure that all marketed Accutane products are accompanied by currently approved labeling, which contains warnings regarding pregnancy and possible psychiatric adverse effects.

Additionally, FDA has initiated discussions with the National Institute of Mental Health to address further research needs. We will work with Hoffmann-La Roche as well as the National Institute of Mental Health on recommendations to help ensure that independent studies proposed will be conducted in a scientifically valid manner.

We look forward to meeting with you on these matters at your convenience, and to a continuing communication on the progress of these actions and our mutual goals in public health protection.

If you have any further questions about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact us again. A similar letter has been sent to your co-signers.

Sincerely,



Melinda K. Plaisier  
Associate Commissioner  
of Legislation