Thomas Curley  
President and Publisher  
USA Today  
1000 Wilson Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22229

Dear Mr. Curley:

We are writing to demand immediate action against all USA Today employees responsible for the decision to allow Glaxo Wellcome to have a "special edition" of USA Today distributed to 7,000 people at the recent International AIDS Conference in Geneva, Switzerland on June 30, 1998. When conference attendees picked up their USA Today they saw what looked to them like the normal front page of USA Today. This pseudoedition used the overall design and logo of a regular issue of USA Today to hawk Glaxo products. There is little reason to expect better from a for-profit pharmaceutical manufacturer, but for a major international newspaper to sell its name and reputation in the service of increased profit is a craven violation of journalistic ethics.

The Society of Professional Journalists is unwavering in its opposition to these sorts of arrangements. Its ethical code declares unequivocally: "Journalists should distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two."  

The "special edition" (see Attachment 1) was a single sheet document (front and back) on paper the same size and quality as a regular issue of USA Today and was delivered free of charge to AIDS conference hotel rooms in Geneva wrapped around the regular European issue, thus apparently using USA Today's usual distribution system. As indicated by a comparison with the regular U.S. issue of USA Today issued on the same day (see Attachment 2), the characteristic USA Today logo with the same coloring was used, flanked by two boxes. The left hand side of the front pages in both versions contains the usual USA Today "Newsline" feature and the bottom left has the customary USA Today graphic "USA Snapshots," now given over to promoting the benefits of Glaxo's Combivir, a drug that treats HIV infection. Fonts, print sizes and other design features are essentially identical to those in a regular edition of the paper.


Ralph Nader, Founder  
1600 20th Street NW • Washington, DC 20009-1001 • (202) 588-1000
It is clear that your paper’s logic has always been to provide people on the go a quick look at the most important news, starting with a glance at the front page. Whereas other newspapers have long had advertising inserts within the paper, you have taken a quantum leap by wrapping the “real” paper with a clever cover that is, in fact, advertising, not news, deliberately leading the reader to believe they are looking at news, not advertising.

The subject matter of the “special edition” is almost completely confined to matters related to Glaxo. Of 15 “news” items, only three do not mention Glaxo drugs directly and none mentions the products of any other company. The three remaining items are a description of a community program in which Glaxo is involved, discussion of a statistical issue apparently designed to justify the way data on Glaxo drugs are presented in other articles, and basic statistics on the AIDS epidemic. Glaxo’s drugs and community activities are invariably portrayed in a favorable light in the articles, which have no bylines. A list of key conference presentations on the back of the “special edition” lists only 13 of the 5,003 presentations at the conference, all involving Glaxo products or programs.

Given the obvious and intended similarity of this “special edition” to a regular edition of USA Today, many readers could have confused this promotional material for an actual edition of USA Today. Although Glaxo’s sponsorship of the “special edition” is disclosed in several locations (a bar with small print across the logo states: “This special promotional edition has been prepared by the USA Today Promotion Department on behalf of Glaxo Wellcome” and bars at the bottom of the first page and top of the second describe the issue as a “Special edition for Glaxo Wellcome” and “News from Glaxo Wellcome,” respectively), the reader is in effect invited to consider this a regular issue of USA Today. After all, why else would Glaxo sponsor a “special edition” of the newspaper? It is only by deceiving the public into believing that this is a regular issue of USA Today that the promotion gains any force.

There is every indication that USA Today plans more of the same. In a box on the second page, the newspaper is put up for bid again. In a come-on for potential future advertisers, it is explained that “This special promotional edition ... is one example of the varied type of added-value programs that help extend the impact and increase the value of an advertising investment in USA Today.”

This disgraceful episode leaves numerous questions unanswered:

* Who at USA Today gave approval for this flagrant violation of journalistic ethics?

* Who actually wrote the copy for the “special edition”? Given the technical nature of some of the contents, did Glaxo write or edit the material?
* What were the financial arrangements under which the “special edition” was produced?

* To whom has USA Today previously sold its name in a similar fashion?

We look forward to answers to these questions.

Newspapers survive by earning a good name for providing accurate, independent, unbiased information to the public, not by auctioning off that name to whomever is willing to pay the price. How dispiriting it must be for those excellent USA Today journalists who cover real news with integrity on a daily basis, only to see their work diminished when the paper turns around and rents out its identity, thereby blurring what should be a bright line between advertising and editorial content.

In the absence of immediate corrective action, any subsequent reporting by USA Today on matters regarding the pharmaceutical industry will be tainted. We trust you will take the strongest possible action to restore the tattered reputation of USA Today by holding the offending employees accountable and by refusing to allow the front page of your newspaper to be hijacked again.

Sincerely,

Peter Lurie, MD, MPH
Research Associate

Sidney M. Wolfe, MD
Director, Health Research Group

Ben Bagdikian
Former Assisting Managing Editor for National News, the Washington Post
Former Dean, School of Journalism
University of California, Berkeley
Author of The Media Monopoly, a critique of growing corporate control of the media
Potency of Amprenavir+Abacavir explored

Preliminary results from a small phase II study suggest that the combination of amprenavir (formerly known as 141/W44) and abacavir (formerly known as 193/267) may effectively suppress HIV replication while being generally well tolerated. The study, an open-label design involving 46 treatment-naive patients, was presented yesterday at the 12th World AIDS Conference in Geneva. Early results from the study indicate that 89 percent of patients (25 of 28) who at the time of the analysis had completed 24 weeks of treatment, had undetectable levels of virus (less than 500 copies/mL). Moreover, 78 percent of patients (32 of 41) who had completed 4 weeks of treatment had undetectable virus, as did 97 percent (37 of 38) of patients who had completed 8 weeks of treatment. The study calls for patients to receive treatment for 72 weeks.

"While these are very preliminary results in a very small number of patients, we are encouraged by the antiviral potency observed thus far," said Lynn Smiley, M.D., vice president of Clinical Development, HIV and Opportunistic Infections at Glaxo Wellcome. "We are also encouraged by the initial indications of tolerability of this regimen."

Adverse events reported in this study included nausea, diarrhea, epigastric pain, headache and rash. At the time of the analysis, two patients had discontinued study drug due to rash. Three percent of patients in clinical trials with abacavir have experienced a hypersensitivity reaction. This reaction is described in the article "Abacavir Data Presented at 12th World AIDS Conference" also found on this page of USA TODAY.

Abacavir data presented at 12th World AIDS Conference

Phase III clinical trial results which further characterize the investigational anti-HIV compound abacavir (formerly known as 193/267, nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor) were presented by researchers Monday afternoon at the 12th World AIDS Conference in Geneva. In preliminary 16-week data from a randomized study of 173 patients enrolled in this study was also evaluated at week 16 by an ultrasensitive assay that can measure viral levels as low as 50 copies per ml of plasma. Using this assay, it was demonstrated that 54 percent of patients in the abacavir/Epivir/Betrelavir group and 45 percent of patients in the Epivir/Betrelavir group had a plasma viral load of less than
Special Edition for Africa Welcome

Tragedy, hope and dreams:

Inside this edition...

- The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on African countries and communities
- Stories of resilience and recovery from African communities
- Expert analysis on the future of Africa's economy
- Interviews with leading African figures and policymakers
- Special features on African culture, art, and cuisine

USA SNAPSHOTS

Cover Story

- The roaring 20s: How the rat race is shaping the future of Africa
- Exploring the impact of climate change on African agriculture
- The rise of African tech startups and their influence on the global landscape

Philanthropy: Giving Back to the Community

- Stories of philanthropic efforts in Africa by African leaders
- The role of NGOs and international organizations in supporting African development
- Success stories of successful African entrepreneurs and their contributions to the continent

Effective Approaches to Tackling Poverty

- Insights from experts on the latest poverty reduction strategies in Africa
- Case studies of successful poverty alleviation programs in African countries
- Debates on the effectiveness of aid and development interventions in Africa
Key Presentations Involving Glaxo Wellcome Products at the 12th World AIDS Conference

Pediatrics: Problems, Drugs and CNS

Full table, interpretation, and additional information provided in the original document.
Maternal-fetal HIV transmission prevention programs

Progress continues in developing countries

Under the direction of UNAIDS, the UNAIDS Program on Maternal-Fetal HIV Transmission Prevention (MFFTP) continues to support countries in their efforts to prevent vertical transmission of HIV to children. The program, launched in 2000, aims to reduce the number of children born to HIV-infected mothers by providing antiretroviral therapy to pregnant women and newborns. The program focuses on countries where the majority of HIV-infected women are not receiving antiretroviral therapy. As of January 2013, the program has supported the implementation of maternal-fetal HIV transmission prevention programs in 17 countries, resulting in an estimated 4,000 fewer children being born with HIV.

The success of the program is evident in the reduction of vertical transmission rates in some countries. For example, in South Africa, the vertical transmission rate decreased from 27% in 2004 to 11% in 2012. This reduction is attributed to the implementation of the MFFTP program, which provided antiretroviral therapy to pregnant women and newborns. Similarly, in Zambia, the vertical transmission rate decreased from 22% in 2004 to 4% in 2012.

However, despite these successes, there is still much work to be done. The MFFTP program is focused on countries where the majority of HIV-infected women are not receiving antiretroviral therapy. This includes countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where the majority of HIV infections occur. In these countries, the program is working to increase access to antiretroviral therapy and to improve the quality of care for pregnant women and newborns.

The MFFTP program is also focused on scaling up the use of antiretroviral therapy in the region. As of January 2013, the program has supported the implementation of maternal-fetal HIV transmission prevention programs in 17 countries, resulting in an estimated 4,000 fewer children being born with HIV.

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**New home sales set record**

W. Virginia's deadly delve

**Unknown no longer: Tomb remains identified as Blassei**

**Grand jurors clearly have own minds**

**NBA owners, citing impasse, impose lockout**
Potency of Amprenavir+Abacavir explored

**NEWSPAPER**

**WELCOME**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 1998**

**INTERACTIVE CARE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ACTS PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV**

**NEWSLINE**

**USA SNAPSHOTS**

**ADHERENCE ISSUES A MAJOR PROBLEM**

**Abacavir data presented at 12th World AIDS Conference**

**STORY**

**SPECIAL EDITION FOR GLAXO WELLCOME**

**CRIB STORY**

**Drug trial analysis: balancing hype and hope**

**ABSTRACT**

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Maternal-fetal HIV transmission prevention programs
Progress continues in developing countries

Under the direction of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a series of international workshops were held in 1991 to assess the impact of the programs on maternal-fetal HIV transmission. The first workshop was held in Geneva, Switzerland in March 1991, and the second in December 1991. The third workshop was held in Nairobi, Kenya in May 1992.

The findings of the workshops were that the programs had been successful in reducing the transmission rate of HIV from mothers to infants. The success was attributed to the use of antiretroviral drugs, particularly zidovudine (ZDV), which is effective in reducing HIV transmission.

In addition to the workshops, a number of countries have implemented programs to reduce maternal-fetal HIV transmission. These programs include the provision of antiretroviral drugs to pregnant women, the use of cesarean section instead of vaginal delivery, and the use of caesarean section in cases where the HIV status of the baby is unknown.

In 1993, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to support the programs, which have been successful in reducing the transmission rate of HIV from mothers to infants.

The success of the programs has been attributed to the use of antiretroviral drugs, particularly zidovudine (ZDV), which is effective in reducing HIV transmission.

USA TODAY is pleased to welcome Glaxo Wellcome to the Pages of The Nation’s Newspaper.

This special promotional edition was prepared by Glaxo Wellcome for USA TODAY for this conference. It is one example of the various types of added-value programs that help extend the impact and increase the value of an advertising investment in USA TODAY.

Each day, millions of Americans around the world turn to USA TODAY. And for good reason. The latest deadline in print keeps readers up-to-date on the news. Computers and editorial keepers inform the world. Timely health features make them relevant to their readers.

An economy of words. A wealth of information. USA TODAY connects with readers every day.

Low-cost nucleic acid amplification (LNA) is now being studied in pregnant women to determine the potential for it to be used in developing countries.

There is no longer any need to ask if we should act, but simply how.

The question is no longer when or if we should act, but simply how.

Penetrating problem: drugs and CNS

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