

## DES Action USA attacks Lilly

DES Action USA, an association formed by individuals who claim to have suffered serious health damage following exposure to diethylstilboestrol has objected to Eli Lilly's co-sponsorship of the Fourth Annual Congress on Women's Health and a dinner in honour of the 1996 Achievement Awards in Women's Health.

Claiming "lack of corporate responsibility with regard to the impact of DES on women's health" by the company, the association argues that Lilly has "consistently denied any damage caused by DES, in stark contrast with clear scientific evidence and consensus of leading medical experts".

DES Action has asked the nine individuals due to receive awards at a June 18th Washington dinner to decline them. Three have already agreed to do so, including Senator Olympia Snowe and Representatives Pat Schroeder and Henry Waxman.

DES Action has asked Lilly for a statement saying that DES caused serious damage, including cancer, reproductive problems, and the possibility of further damage to mothers, daughters, and sons exposed to DES during the time it was manufactured and marketed by the company. It also wants a public apology to the DES-exposed population to be published in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Los Angeles Times.

Lilly has not responded to the letter. It told *Scrip* that it was constrained from comment by ongoing litigation but was confident that it acted in accordance with accepted scientific and medical knowledge. It added that it recently established a Center for Women's Health, which promotes women's health through research, education and advocacy. Part of its interest in women's health stems from a significant product in the company's pipeline - the selective oestrogen receptor modulator, raloxifene, which is in Phase III trials for osteoporosis treatment.

DES has never been banned in the US. In 1971, however, the FDA sent out a "physician's advisory" alerting physicians to the abnormally high incidence of vaginal and cervical cancer in daughters of women who had taken the drug, which was prescribed to prevent miscarriage. A number of companies were named in lawsuits, including Lilly, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Upjohn. The drug is still approved in the US for the palliative treatment of advanced prostate cancer and certain types of breast cancer.

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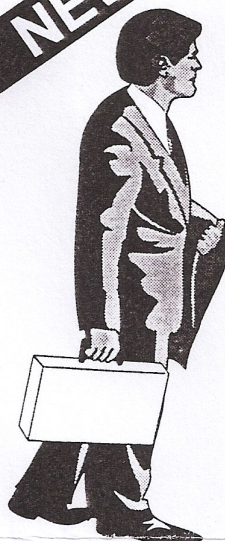
#### ■ Volvo to sell Pharmacia & Upjohn shares:

Pharmacia & Upjohn has filed a registration statement with the US SEC for an offering of the majority of its shares held by Volvo. Following the sale, Volvo's stake will fall from 13.7% to 3.3%. The underwriters are Goldman Sachs and Merrill Lynch. The sale is in line with Volvo's plans to concentrate on automotive and transport equipment operations.

#### ■ Sandoz awards Japan gerontological research grants:

The Sandoz Foundation for Gerontological Research has awarded grants of SwFr 20,000 (\$15,500) each to five recipients in Japan. They include work on gene therapy for Parkinson's disease (Hiroyuki Ikari, Nagoya University), and molecular mechanisms of oestrogen action against senile disease (Akira Orimo, Saitama Medical School).

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