

Washington Drug Letter

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California AG Issues More Subpoenas Over Drug Marketing

Eli Lilly, Pfizer and Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS) have joined AstraZeneca as targets of subpoenas from the California Office of the Attorney General over marketing practices for top-selling antipsychotic drugs.

The Eli Lilly subpoena is for documents relating to its marketing and promotional practices for Zyprexa (olanzapine), which is used to treat schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, as well as the company's efforts to obtain and maintain the drug's status on California's formulary and its remuneration of healthcare providers.

Company spokesman Phil Belt told WDL the company is cooperating with the request and is not adding anything else to its announcement.

The company also said that it continues to be a defendant in many Zyprexa product liability lawsuits, the majority of which allege that the drug caused or contributed to diabetes or high blood-glucose levels. Almost all of the federal lawsuits are part of a "multi-district litigation" before Judge Jack Weinstein in the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

A Pfizer spokesman confirmed that the company received a subpoena Sept. 8 from the California attorney general's office concerning Geodon (ziprasidone HCl and ziprasidone mesylate), which is used to treat schizophrenia and acute manic or mixed episodes associated with bipolar disorder. The company is "cooperating fully," said the spokesman, who declined to elaborate.

BMS also received a subpoena, this one seeking documents in connection with Abilify (aripiprazole), used to treat schizophrenia and related psychiatric disorders, and is cooperating with the investigation, company spokesman Craig Stoltz said.

In AstraZeneca's case, the company received subpoenas from the attorneys general of both California and Alaska seeking information about its marketing practices for Seroquel (quetiapine fumarate), which is used to treat patients with depressive episodes associated with bipolar disorder. In addition, the SEC has made an "informal inquiry" to the company regarding payments to foreign doctors and government officials, the company said