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There are many debates involving governments, lobbyists, attorneys and economists regarding the upcoming IGWG Hearing on public health/innovation/intellectual property, yet comments from physicians who are challenged with finding effective medications to treat their patients go unheard. Our association, HAAMA (a non profit association made up of physicians and allied health personnel) is writing to give a voice to those medical professionals concerned with this upcoming IGWG Hearing.

One of the most important factors in effective medical care is support of the innovation needed in developing new medications to treat ongoing disease variations and resistance. Without the development of effective medications, doctors would lose a tool vital for the care of patients. Whether this medical care is provided in a modern metropolis or remote impoverished region, ongoing innovation, research and development (R & D) of new medications is essential to the improvement of health care for all patients as well as the prevention of disease worldwide.

Although infectious diseases, such as HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, malaria, etc., have been a priority, many chronic diseases have also emerged as significant factors in the morbidity and mortality rates of the world community. Obesity, cardiovascular, pulmonary problems all require the development of new medications. Organisms continue to mutate and resistance to microbials steadily increases. Medications must be continually developed in order to keep up with the ever-changing pathogenesis of diseases.

Health organizations (private and governmental) steadily strive to reduce the cost of care by replacing brand drugs with different compounds. Substandard manufacturing practices also add to the burden of disease-ridden communities. These processes often negatively impact the desired outcome and overlook the best care for the patient. Furthermore, advances in the studies of pharmacogenetics indicate that medication responses vary among different ethnic groups making the concept of "one medication fits all" obsolete. While we sympathize with a government's struggle with major health issues, removing patents that stimulate research and development will not provide a solution but will result in the absence of innovation.

The January 2007 working paper by Carlos Correa examined guidelines of pharmaceutical patents and suggests placing impractical restrictions on new patents. Although the paper appears to be based on in depth consultations and an effort to ease a public health crisis, this paper only serves to disparage pharmaceutical innovation and ultimately discourage investment in pharmaceutical research and development. This paper could be interpreted as an intended boost to the economic prospects of generic producers but more importantly this paper encourages governments to refuse to respect pharmaceutical patents.

Many medications currently available to treat world health issues (such as HIV/Aids and diabetes, etc.) exist due to private endeavors in research and development. Furthermore the fact that the greatest number of new medications have been researched and developed in the USA underscores a strong connection between private enterprise and drug development. If suggestions to limit patents on intellectual properties are heeded, the innovative development of medications necessary in our ever-changing world will cease. Patent protection of intellectual property is vital to the development of new drugs and this development is vital to good medical care now and in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Quel', written in a cursive style.

Jorge A. Quel, MD, FAAAAI, FACAAI
Executive Director