New Hep C Drugs Lead to Cancellation of Vertex’s Incivek

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Following the release of newer, improved therapies to treat hepatitis C virus (HCV), Vertex Pharmaceuticals has decided to discontinue Incivek (telaprevir), The Wall Street Journal reports. Vertex announced in an August 11 letter to physicians that the NS3/4A protease inhibitor will come off the market October 16. In May, Vertex announced it was ending its hep C research and development program.

Released to much fanfare in 2011, Incivek had a rapid rise and fall. After the initial glut of people with hep C received treatment—more than 100,000 people took the drug all told—news began to emerge of forthcoming drugs in the pipeline that offered improved success rates as well as the chance for treating without interferon. (Incivek must be paired with interferon, which has flu-like side effects which are a major deterrent to those considering treatment.) Consequently, Incivek sales declined as physicians “warehoused” patients in anticipation of the release of Gilead Sciences’ Sovaldi (sofosbuvir) and Janssen’s Olysio (simeprevir), which were each approved at the end of 2013.

While Gilead sold a record-shattering $5.78 billion during the first six months of 2014, Vertex sold just $13.2 million of Incivek during that same time, which amounted to a 96 percent fall from the $361.4 million in sales during the first half of 2013.

Express Scripts, the largest pharmacy benefits manager in the country, recently announced that Incivek was one of 66 medications that would be removed from the company’s national formulary in 2015.

To read the WSJ story, click here.

To read the Vertex letter, click here.

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http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/article/Incivek-discontinuation-26046-266430659