



Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM) helps students campaign at academic institutions around the world to make certain that medicines discovered on our campuses are made affordable and accessible to patients in developing countries. We also work to play a positive role in creating legislation that brings better access to healthcare to patients in our home countries and around the world. This legislation at the national level can have profound effects on access to medicines at the global level.

We believe universities should work for the public interest by designing policies and taking public positions that push for better healthcare for patients. Too often, universities have failed to live up to this expectation, both by failing to responsibly manage the essential medicines emerging from their labs, and by taking public positions that favor the interests of the pharmaceutical industry over the interests of patients.

In order to hold universities accountable, UAEM calls on students to participate in a Global Access to Medicines Month of action in solidarity with other chapters around the world (formerly Global Access to Medicines Day). We would like to extend an invitation for your chapter to participate this April in a concerted action designed to encourage our universities to support global access to medicines.

I. International Action

Global Access Licensing: This year, a number of major universities including Harvard, Yale, Penn, Duke, UBC, and the National Institutes of Health, in response to UAEM campaigning, adopted a policy statement committing them to ensuring low-cost access to medicines discovered on those campuses for patients in developing countries. This statement represents a non-controversial partial step on the road to achieving better access to university technology. In spite of its endorsement by leading research institutions, many of our universities have declined to sign on to this statement. **Every university must take progressive action and adopt effective global access licensing policies.** Endorsing the statement is a simple first step; we believe universities can and should go further. See if your campus has endorsed the *Statement of Principles and Strategies* at www.autm.net/endorse.

II. United States and Canada Action

Generic Biologics. In the recent debate over healthcare reform in the United States, universities have stood with pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry groups in fighting for legislation that will hurt patients by keeping the costs of new medicines high. The United States Congress has very recently adopted long-overdue reforms to allow generic production of biologics, drugs derived from living cells. Universities have supported a fake generic pathway that would use lengthy new patent-like intellectual property provisions to prevent most generic biologics from reaching patients in need. Big Pharma has already signaled that when it wins the biologics battle in the US, it will lobby hard to expand these anti-competitive protections to all new drugs, and use U.S. clout in trade negotiations to push for similar legislation around the world. The Association of American Universities (AAU), has been a critical voice in lobbying for this harmful bill, and many of our universities in the United States and Canada are members of AAU. **Universities must retract their endorsement of federal legislation that will prevent affordable access to generic biologics.** See if your university is an AAU member at www.aau.edu and learn more about generic biologics at www.affordablemedsnow.org.

Gene Patenting. Excessive patenting of genes by universities and others has led to blockages in life-saving research and put high costs on using our own genes to improve our health. Recently, an expert federal panel made recommendations to the Secretary of Health and



Human Services to curb abusive gene patenting. In response, a trade association of university administrators, the Association of University Technology Managers, (AUTM) publicly fought the panel's recommendations and argued in favor of maintaining the abusive practices. This approach puts industry profits in front of the interests of researchers and patients. **Universities must retract their opposition to the recommendations given to the Secretary of Health and Human Services that work to improve patient access to essential diagnostic services.** Read more at: www.essentialmedicine.org.

III. Canada Action

Canada's Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR): CAMR is a compulsory licensing mechanism first introduced in 2004 as part of the Government of Canada's broader strategy to assist developing and least-developed countries in obtaining lower-cost medicines for diseases that are endemic to those populations. It allows Canada to export drugs to countries that need them on a case-by-case, drug-by-drug and country-by-country basis. Bill C-393 is a proposed amendment to simplify CAMR that seeks to remove several legal, administrative and economic barriers and to include legal flexibilities. Bill C-393 has recently passed its second reading in the Canadian House of Commons and is currently scheduled for review by the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology as early as April 2010. **Students in Canada must continue to pressure their politicians to support CAMR reform.** Read more on the issue at www.essentialmedicine.org/projects/legislation/canada and www.aidslaw.ca/camr.

IV. Europe Action

In addition to participating in the Global Access Licensing campaign, there will be additional support for the coordinated chapters in the United Kingdom and Germany later in the month of April. Updated information will be posted at www.essentialmedicine.org/action. All chapters are encouraged to take action on global access licensing at their campuses and **use the collective voice of students around the world calling on universities to take progressive action and adopt effective global access licensing policies.** There is significant momentum moving forward with more and more universities recognizing their obligation to ensure that university research is managed in a way that ensures global access to the essential medicines created in our labs. Now is the time to take action.

Overall, the issues above demonstrate a troubling lack of independence of our universities from pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. Universities often play a critical role in national and international debates over healthcare, because they are trusted to act in the public interest. As members of the university community, we must work to ensure that trust is not abused by taking a position that favors profits over the public interest. Our Global Access to Medicines Month seeks to hold universities accountable to their non-profit mission and dedication to the public good. The annual spring UAEM action is a fantastic and exciting rallying point for students across the globe to draw attention to the role of universities and access to medicines. We hope your chapter can participate, please go to www.essentialmedicine.org/action to learn more about the issues, how your chapter can take action, and to register your event.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication to UAEM's mission and vision. For more information on Global Access to Medicines Month, please contact your appropriate chapter outreach coordinator whose contact information can be found at www.essentialmedicine.org/chapters/outreach-coordinators.