

Abbott Laboratories quietly increased the price of Norvir by 400 percent Dec. 4, from \$1.71 to \$8.57 per 100-milligram pill. The protease inhibitor primarily is used in subtherapeutic doses with other protease inhibitors to delay their clearance by the liver. That means the price increase will be felt widely.

The AIDS community has only slowly become aware of the increase and is reacting with outrage and threats of boycott.

The company has asserted that the increase is a long-overdue price adjustment and reflects the cost of past research when it had to reformulate the compound. It also is not increasing the price to state-run AIDS drug assistance programs.

But many observers are calling it a ploy by Abbott to increase the market share of Kaletra, its other protease inhibitor. Kaletra had been losing ground to other protease inhibitors that recently have been approved for sale. This would boost the total cost of other protease inhibitors that must use Norvir as booster.

Michael Weinstein, president of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, noted that even while the price of Norvir was skyrocketing, the price of Kaletra, which uses Norvir to boost its potency, did not increase at all.

"This is purely a marketing ploy to push for a larger market share for Kaletra by driving providers and patients to this cheaper Abbott combination therapy," he said. "The HIV community as a whole should unite and speak out against Abbott's bald-faced greed."

"Abbott is feeding like a vulture on the bones of our health care system," the AIDS Treatment Activists Coalition said in a flier it is distributing about the price increase. The organization, in a letter to Abbott dated Dec. 22,

BITTER PILL

Community outraged at AIDS drug price increase

by Bob Roehr

noted that tipranavir, a promising protease inhibitor under development by Boehringer Ingelheim, uses 400 milligrams of Norvir daily. If the price increase stands and if tipranavir is approved by the Food and Drug Administration, its price would be about \$20,000 a year, several times that of other currently available protease inhibitors.

"Abbott has changed the landscape of HIV/AIDS for the worse—is this what it wants to be known for?" the coalition asked. "We believe that it is in the overall interests of your company to reconsider this shameful and destructive path."

The HIV Medicine Association called on Abbott to rescind the price increase. "It is critical that the implications of your actions on access to the majority of treatment regimens available to persons living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. be given paramount consideration," it wrote in a Dec. 18 letter to Abbott. "This increase comes at a time when public programs that provide access to HIV treatment are struggling to keep costs down, and numerous [AIDS drug assistance programs] have been forced to impose eligibility and formulary restrictions and/or waiting lists."

Howard Grossman, a physician in New York City with a large HIV practice, said in a widely circulated e-mail that he is "going to refuse to have Abbott reps in my office and will try to

find alternatives to any of their drugs I can." He also is asking the American Academy of HIV Medicine, where he serves as chairman of the policy committee, to return any funding from Abbott.

"To receive academic or financial support from Abbott Laboratories would be an insult to the many patients who this decision so greatly impacts," Benjamin Young wrote to the company. The HIV doc and clinical instructor of medicine at University of Colorado has rescinded any offer to lecture on behalf of the company, attend its advisory committee meetings or support its research projects.

The London-based AIDSmap quoted one pharmaceutical company research scientist as saying: "This isn't just an attack on competitors' pricing, it's an attack on their research strategies. Why bother investing in these areas if Abbott has effectively priced you out of the market?"

There is an unconfirmed report that crusading New York Attorney General Elliot Spitzer has initiated an investigation into the price increase.

Grapefruit juice and a number of other drugs have an effect similar to Norvir in terms of slowing the liver's clearance of drugs such as a protease

Stop Abbott Greed!

The 400% Norvir Price Increase is a Killer!



Abbott is feeding like a vulture on the bones of our healthcare system.

Limiting choices for people with HIV who need salvage regimens.

Threatening AIDS drug development for people with few options.

There is a national HIV/AIDS funding crisis - ADAP/Medicaid/Medicare are in trouble. Drug prices are out of control. Waiting lists are spreading. Sham drug giveaway programs are no substitute for fair pricing. The new Norvir price breaks the bank - Boosted saquinavir or indinavir prices will double. Boosted Reyataz 25% more expensive. Tipranavir will be through the roof. New drug development is put in jeopardy. People who need salvage regimens are under attack. All to protect Abbott's market share for Kaletra.

Tell Abbott:

Stop feeding off people with AIDS!

Call Abbott: (847) 937-6100
Ask for Miles White, CEO.
Tell him to roll back the price of Norvir. Now!

The AIDS Treatment Activists Coalition is distributing this flier about the price increase of protease inhibitor Norvir

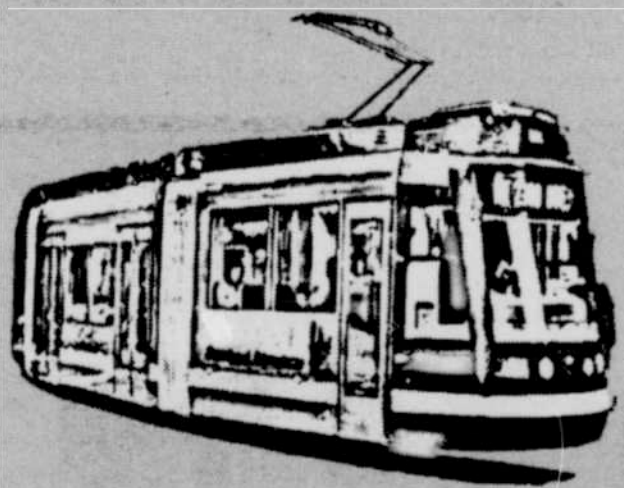
inhibitors. But none of the alternatives has been studied in a clinical setting, so no data exists on whether or how they might be substituted.

Given Abbott's price increase, that is an area that researchers are likely to give new attention. **J**

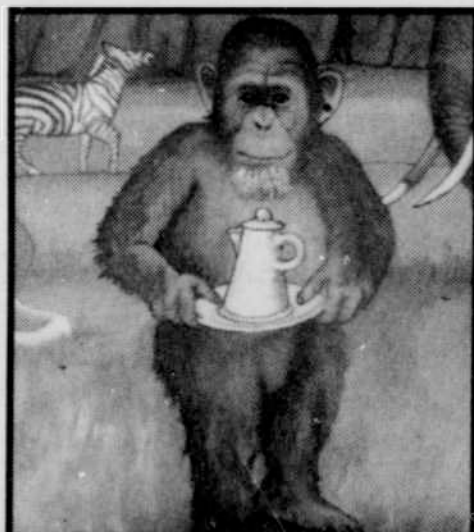
BOB ROEHR is a free-lance reporter based in Washington, D.C.

THE PEARL THE PEARL THE PEARL THE PEARL THE PEARL THE PEARL THE PEARL

THE PEARL



WORLD CUP
COFFEE & TEA



m-f 6:30 - 7:00pm • s-s 7:30 - 7:00pm
721 NW 10th Avenue • 503-546-7377

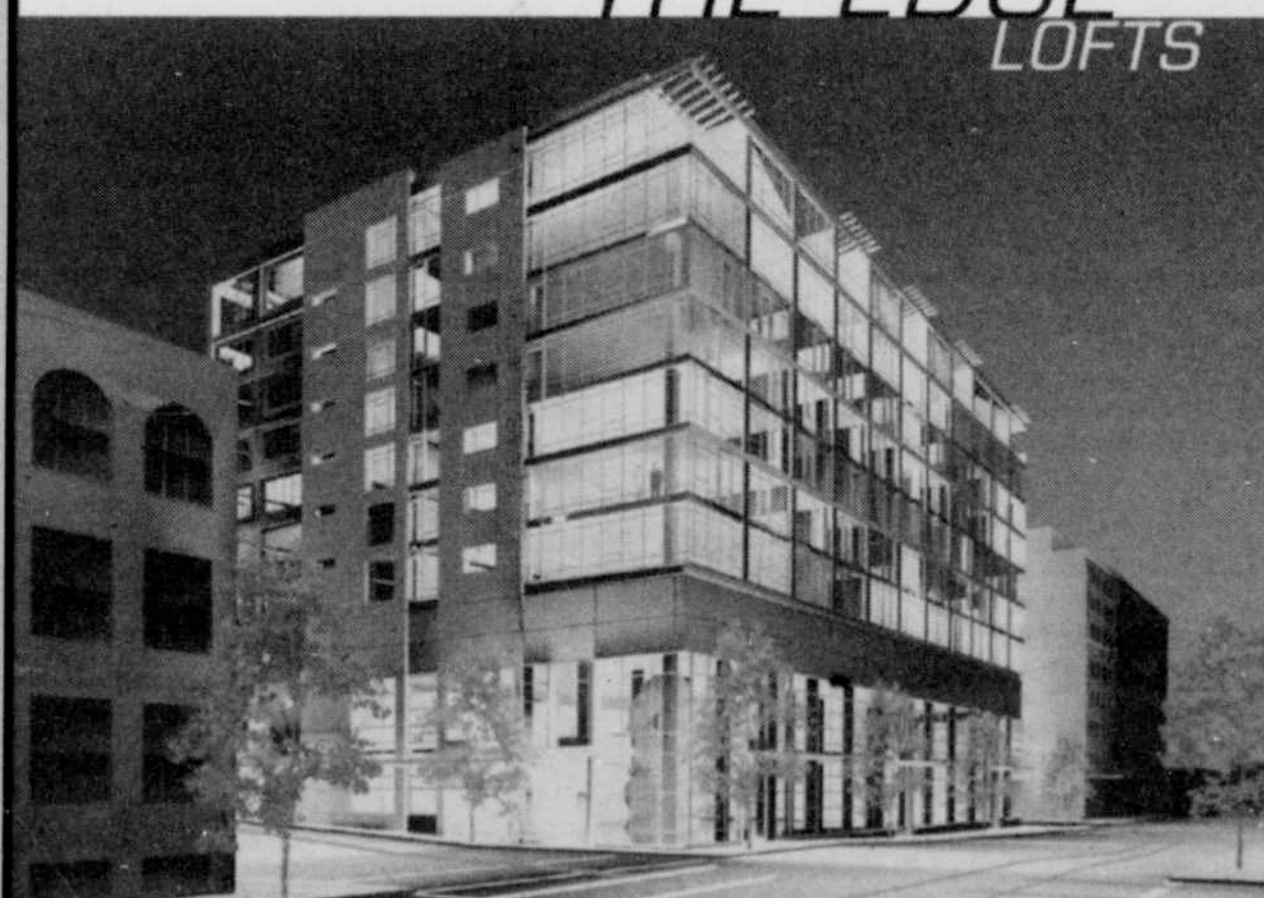
PHỞ
VĂN
Vietnamese Bistro

A Taste
of Vietnam
three course dinner
\$15 per person
Mon - Thurs
5:00pm - 7:00pm

Gift Certificates
Available

PEARL DISTRICT
1012 NW Glisan Street • 503.248.2172

>>> THE EDGE
LOFTS



LOFTS AT THE EDGE

NW 14th & Kearney
in Portland's Pearl District

Sales Office: 1122 NW Glisan
Open: Tue - Fri 10am-5pm
Sat 11am-5pm, Sun 12-4pm

503.226.4252 www.edgelofts.com

MODERN DESIGN
URBAN LIVING

840-2,500 SF Lofts
From \$210,000

A Carroll Aspen
Development Project