United States Senate
Committee on Finance

Sen. Chuck Grassley · Iowa
Ranking Member

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Reporters and Editors
FR: Jill Kozeny, 202/224-1308
for U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley
RE: Controversy over delayed release of drug trial on Vytorin
DA: Thursday, January 24, 2008

Senator Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member of the Committee on Finance, is asking drug makers Schering-Plough and Merck to explain when the companies first unblinded ENHANCE trial results and to account for sales and payments made for the cholesterol drug Vytorin to Medicaid. Senator Grassley has also written to the Securities and Exchange Commission, the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology regarding this matter. Copies of all four letters are posted with this statement at http://finance.senate.gov.

Background information:

Schering-Plough and Merck recently released the results of the ENHANCE trial which studied whether Vytorin performed as well as a generic statin to lower cholesterol levels. Vytorin is a combination pill of ezetimibe and a generic statin. The ENHANCE trial results found that Vytorin performed just as well as a much cheaper statin. The professional associations issued statements at the time the ENHANCE study was released, so Sen. Grassley is asking for more information about contributions to this statement. For the past three years, Senator Grassley has conducted oversight of various federal agencies and companies to ensure that peer reviewed science forms the basis for decisions in healthcare and healthcare payments.

Senator Grassley's comment:

"In Iowa City, generic simvastatin costs $54.54 for a month's supply while Vytorin costs $112.46. It's fair to assume the public would have benefitted from knowing that a less expensive drug works just as well. Instead, people in Iowa and elsewhere paid more for nearly two years while industry leaders sat on a scientific study that would have revealed this information."