



## **Merck Announces Voluntary Worldwide Withdrawal of VIOXX**

Dear Healthcare Professional:

Merck & Co., Inc. today announced a voluntary worldwide withdrawal of VIOXX (rofecoxib), its arthritis and acute pain medication. The Company's decision, which is effective immediately, is based on new, three year data from a prospective, randomized, placebo-controlled clinical trial, the APPROVe (Adenomatous Polyp Prevention on VIOXX) trial.

The trial, which is being stopped, was designed to evaluate the efficacy of VIOXX 25mg in preventing recurrence of colorectal polyps in patients with a history of colorectal adenomas. In this study, there was an increased relative risk for confirmed cardiovascular (CV) events, such as heart attack and stroke, beginning after 18 months of treatment in the patients taking VIOXX compared to those taking placebo. The results for the first 18 months of the APPROVe study did not show any increased risk of confirmed CV events on VIOXX, and in this respect are similar to the results of two placebo-controlled studies described in the current US labeling for VIOXX.

We are taking this action because we believe it best serves the interests of patients. Although we believe it would have been possible to continue to market VIOXX with labeling that would incorporate these new data, given the availability of alternative therapies, and the questions raised by the data, we concluded that a voluntary withdrawal is the responsible course of action.

APPROVe was a multi-center, randomized, placebo-controlled, double blind study to determine the effect of 156 weeks (3 years) of treatment with VIOXX on the recurrence of neoplastic polyps of the large bowel in patients with a history of colorectal adenoma. The trial enrolled 2600 patients, and compared VIOXX 25 mg to placebo. The trial began enrollment in 2000.

Results of the VIGOR (VIOXX GI Outcomes Research) study, released in March 2000, demonstrated that the risk of gastrointestinal (GI) toxicity with VIOXX was less than with naproxen, but indicated an increased risk of cardiovascular events versus naproxen. However, in other studies including our Phase III studies that

were the basis of regulatory approval of the product, there was not an increased risk of CV events on VIOXX compared with placebo or VIOXX compared with other non-naproxen NSAIDs. Merck began long-term randomized clinical trials to provide an even more comprehensive picture of the cardiovascular safety profile of VIOXX.

Merck has always believed that prospective, randomized, controlled clinical trials are the best way to evaluate the safety of medicines. APPROVe is precisely this type of study--and it has provided us with new data on the cardiovascular profile of VIOXX. While the cause of these results is uncertain at this time, they suggest an increased risk of confirmed CV events beginning after eighteen months of continuous therapy. While we recognize that VIOXX benefited many patients, we believe this action is appropriate.

Merck has informed the FDA of our decision. Physicians should discontinue VIOXX in patients currently taking VIOXX and consider possible alternative treatments.

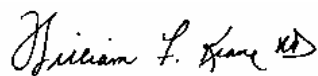
The results of clinical studies with one molecule in a given class are not necessarily applicable to others in the class. Therefore, the clinical significance of the APPROVe trial, if any, for the long term use of other drugs in this class, consisting of Cox-2 specific inhibitors and NSAIDs, is unknown.

If a patient asks you about returning unused VIOXX, please advise the patient that Merck will reimburse them for the cost of unused product. Instructions for patient reimbursement are attached and are posted at [www.vioxx.com](http://www.vioxx.com) or can be obtained by calling (888) 36VIOXX or (888) 368-4699.

Patients and health care professionals may obtain information from [www.merck.com](http://www.merck.com) and [www.vioxx.com](http://www.vioxx.com), or may call 1-888-36-VIOXX (1-888-368-4699).

The Prescribing Information for VIOXX accompanies this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William F. Keane MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

William F. Keane, MD  
Vice President  
US Medical and Scientific Affairs

These instructions are specifically for patients. Other customers, such as Pharmacies and Wholesalers/Distributors, will receive separate instructions on how to return product and receive credit.

This information is also available on [www.vioxx.com](http://www.vioxx.com) and [www.merck.com](http://www.merck.com)

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**Instructions for Patients on how to receive refund for unused VIOXX**

Merck will reimburse patients for unused VIOXX.

Patients seeking a refund should return any unused VIOXX<sup>®</sup> tablets and oral suspension via regular U.S. mail to the following address:

NNC Group  
Merck Returns  
2670 Executive Drive  
Indianapolis, IN 46241  
1.800.805.9542

Patients must include the following information when returning any unused VIOXX<sup>®</sup> tablets and oral suspension:

1. Name, Address and Phone number
2. Unused product in its original pharmacy packaging
3. Pharmacy receipt corresponding to returned product

Patients will receive a full refund of the price paid as reflected on their pharmacy receipt, plus the cost of shipping via regular U.S. mail.