
Volume 5 / Issue 1 2003 (English) - News

Industry News

Schering AG posts positive results for last year Berlin - Dr. Hubertus Erlen, CEO and chairman of the executive board of Schering AG has welcomed the pharmaceutical group's positive results for last year. In a statement, Erlen said he was "especially pleased with the significant sales growth of greater than 22 per cent in dollars in the U.S." Schering reported a net rise of 4% in group sales in 2002, bringing the total value of sales to €5 billion. Final results will not be made available until late February this year when the company's consolidated financial statements for 2002 are scheduled for publication. However, early indications from sources in the company point to double-digit growth in year-on-year net profits. Betaferon (Interferon beta 1-b), the company's treatment for multiple sclerosis remains its top selling product, having recorded sales of €783 million for the year, an increase of 15% on the previous year. Sales of Yasmin (Drospirenon und Ethinylestradiol), an oral contraceptive drug, more than doubled in 2002 to €152 million

Bayer Enters US Telemedicine Market with Joint Venture

Leverkusen - The announcement by Bayer Healthcare of a joint venture deal with the Japanese company, Matsushita Electric Industrial (Panasonic) signals the company's plans to play a strong role in the telemedicine market. The new joint company, which will be known as Viterion TeleHealthcare, will develop products and services in the USA for patients with diabetes and other chronic illnesses. According to Wolfgang Hartwig, President of Bayer Diagnostics, "Telehealth technology shows great promise in facilitating managed care for patients in the home setting." Speaking in Brussels at a meeting of the Federation of German Industry called to discuss economic affairs, Bayer CEO, Werner Wenning, pointed out that the partnership will extend throughout the globe. The scale of the US market, he added, makes it the market of choice for testing telemedicine.

Aventis and Bayer Halt Co-operation Plans

Frankfurt - Following a year of negotiations, two leading drugs companies, Bayer and Aventis, have announced they no longer plan to pursue plans for a joint venture. High hopes that the two companies were about to embark on a partnership in blood plasma products were put to an abrupt end by a terse statement issued by both companies in January. According to the statement, both sides have agreed not to pursue their plans to create a joint venture. The failure of the talks indicates that Bayer's ongoing efforts to establish major strategic alliances are meeting with little success. Had the project proceeded as initially envisaged, the joint venture led by Bayer and valued at some €2 billion would have been a world leader in biological products.

Just a year ago in Strasbourg, Aventis enthusiastically embraced plans to enter a partnership deal with Bayer, while former Bayer boss, Manfred Schneider, described the move as an "important step in expanding our activities in the healthcare business." Speaking during recent talks in Brussels on the economy organised by the Federation of German Industry, Schneider's successor, Werner Wenning, refused to be drawn into a discussion on the reasons for the failure of the deal. However, a confident statement from the company noted that Bayer remains "strong enough to continue to develop the business alone." The Bayer group, it added, has secured a viable presence in the market for blood plasma products through longterm contracts. Clearly, the company believes the blood banks of Aventis, one of the leading manufacturers of therapeutic proteins, are dispensable. "We will be profitable in this sector in 2003", a spokeswoman said.

Hospitalia ActivHealth Recruited to Improve Image of NHS

London - Health consultancy Hospitalia activHealth, which is based in the German state of Hessen, is one of three foreign consulting firms selected by the British Department of Health to provide expert advice to state-run health providers. In a Europe-wide tender process, Hospitalia activHealth, which is a subsidiary of the Fresenius Group, was one of eight external consultancies that met the criteria for offering guidance to the National Health Service. The Blair government hopes the project, which aims to utilise the expertise of outside consultants to polish up the tarnished public image of the British health system, will ultimately lead to improved patient care in the NHS.

Aventis Optimistic on the Back of Strong Results

Paris - Franco-German drugs group, Aventis, has announced profit growth of 39% for the 2002 business year and has expressed high hopes for the coming year on the back of its strong performance. While net income from group activities rose to some €2.1 billion last year, up from €1.5 billion the previous year, the company posted an 11.2% decline in consolidated net sales, which dipped to €20.6 billion in 2002 from €22.9 billion in the previous year. This fall has been attributed to the decision to sell non-core businesses, principally Aventis CropScience and Aventis Nutrition. According to Group CEO, Igor Landau, Aventis expects double-digit sales growth in the coming year, with core businesses in the pharmaceutical sector expected to perform best.

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