

Top 10 Drug Companies of 2014



2014 was a good year for the pharmaceutical industry. Following are the top ten drug companies ranked on the basis of their financial performance and their drug approval count.

1. **Actavis:** At the top of the list is Actavis, a company that is rapidly changing the Big Pharma landscape. According to Chief Executive Brent Saunders, the company's strategy is to create a new kind of "growth pharma" that combines generic drug making, which is Actavis' traditional business, with creating franchises of valuable pharmaceutical brands. Overall Grade: **A-**
2. **Celgene:** A company having a piece of the hottest areas in cancer development. These include the metabolic drugs being developed by Agios Pharmaceutical and the CAR-T cells it is working on with Bluebird Bio. Overall Grade: **A-**
3. **Amgen:** In 2014, Amgen's biggest win was the clinical data that proved the usefulness of Kyprolis, the multiple myeloma drug Amgen had acquired through Onyx Pharmaceuticals. In addition, there are great hopes associated with its new cholesterol drug, evolocumab as well as other drugs in development. Amgen has received approval for Blincyto, a cancer drug and seems to be well-positioned to launch off-patent biotech drugs in the foreseeable future. Overall Grade: **B+**
4. **Eli Lilly:** Although the company did not have a great 2013, it has delivered on multiple fronts in 2014. Eli Lilly has been able to regain its traditional stronghold of diabetes and received approval for its gastric cancer drug Cyramza. It also has a good line-up of experimental drugs. However, Eli Lilly's two biggest opportunities, evacetrapib for heart disease and solanezumab for Alzheimer's disease are still high-risk bets. Time will tell how that plays out. Overall grade: **B+**
5. **Gilead Sciences:** Gilead had the best product launch in pharmaceutical history with Sovaldi, a drug for Hepatitis C. The company has a good pipeline of drugs for Hepatitis B and non-alcoholic disease. Overall Grade: **B**
6. **Novartis AG:** Novartis had a good year. The company purchased GlaxoSmithKline's cancer assets, shed off its vaccine business and continued to invest in CAR-T therapy. Its heart failure drug LCZ696 seems to hold significant potential. Overall Grade: **B**
7. **Merck:** The company was able to get several FDA approvals in 2014 including its melanoma drug Keytruda. Things are also looking up for its Hepatitis C program with the acquisition of Idenix in June. In addition, the purchase of antibiotic maker Cubist may bolster Merck's antibiotic pipeline. Overall Grade: **B**
8. **AstraZeneca:** AstraZeneca had more drug approvals from the FDA than any other company. In addition, its drug pipeline looks quite promising with cancer and asthma drugs being developed. There are still doubts though about its blood thinner Brilinta or fish oil Epanova. Overall Grade: **B-**
9. **Johnson & Johnson:** The company has showed a steady performance. Despite intense competition, Xarelto, a blood thinner and Zytiga, for prostate cancer continued to perform well. The company's anti-infectives were found to work quite well against neglected diseases such as Ebola and tuberculosis. Johnson & Johnson is also a co-developer of Pharmacyclics' Imbruvica which seems to be a good investment. Overall Grade: **B-**
10. **Novo Nordisk:** The company continues to sustain its dominant position in the diabetes market and is delivering steady growth. Overall Grade: **B-**

Other companies that did well in 2014 include AbbVie, Biogen Idec, Bristol Myers Squibb, Roche, Pfizer, Sanofi and Glaxo Smith Kline.

Source: Forbes.

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