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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 6, 2011

Richard Roberts, MD, PhD  
President, CEO, and Chairman  
URL Pharma  
1100 Orthodox Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19124-3168

Dear Dr. Roberts,

Ohioans suffering from gout and their doctors have alerted me to a significant price increase in the medicine they depend on to treat gout. It appears that after Colcrys – the branded version of colchicine – won approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the treatment cost increased by nearly 12,400 percent.

As you know, three million Americans utilize colchicine to treat their gout. According to the American College of Rheumatology, colchicine has been used for more than 200 years as an inexpensive pain-reliever and anti-inflammatory. Prior to FDA approval of Colcrys, 21 firms – including URL Pharma – were manufacturing oral colchicine and selling it for as little as \$0.04 a pill. After your company received FDA approval and became the sole source for colchicine, the price spiked to \$5.00 a pill.

I understand the standard regimen for an individual living with gout – but not experiencing a gout flare-up – is two doses per day. With three million Americans living with gout – taking an average of two pills per day, – URL Pharma could earn \$10.9 billion in the first year alone. And the nearly \$11 billion in costs to seniors may be a conservative estimate since it does not account for the increased need for Colchicine during a flare-up.

While I understand and commend the FDA for its efforts to ensure that drugs marketed and sold in the United States are safe and effective, I am deeply concerned that your company seems to be taking advantage of FDA approval at the expense of those with gout. This not only places a burden on the Medicare and Medicaid budgets, but on seniors living on fixed incomes as well.

Seniors living on Social Security receive on average \$14,000 a year in benefits. Following your price increase, seniors with gout will now pay \$3,500 more each year – amounting to one-fourth of their earned Social Security benefits – for treatment. Seniors without the means to afford this increase may skip dosages of Colcrys, resulting in increased gout flares.

I urge you and your company to reevaluate this price increase.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator