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PRESS RELEASE

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Merck and Abbott Act to Fill Gap for AIDS Patients
Medications to be offered with no charge for eligible wait list patients

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Wednesday, Merck and Abbott, companies that research and manufacture life-saving medications to combat HIV/AIDS, announced a partnership with the Heinz Family Philanthropies and Welvista, a non-profit pharmacy based in South Carolina. This partnership is aimed at identifying and enrolling HIV/AIDS patients who are eligible for access to the Ryan White AIDS Drug Assistance Program, or ADAP, but who have been placed on waiting lists to receive treatment.

“At a time when wait lists continue to spiral out of control and President Obama is calling on the pharmaceutical industry and private philanthropy to shoulder responsibility for ensuring these patients have access to treatment, Merck, Abbott, Welvista and Heinz Family Philanthropies have answered the call,” remarked William Arnold, executive director for the Community Access National Network. “While accessing individual drugs from individual companies can be a cumbersome process for patients, this partnership is aimed at streamlining the process and will undoubtedly have a profoundly positive impact on HIV patients who are currently waiting for treatment. I salute this visionary industry/philanthropy effort and hope that all HIV medication manufacturers will join this much needed effort as quickly as possible”

“Nevertheless,” continued Mr. Arnold, “while this is a positive step that will alleviate some stress in the system in the coming months and will bolster the new funding stream the White House announced earlier this week, ultimately, the goal should be for these patients to receive full and comprehensive treatment through the Ryan White drug assistance program.”

“We are certainly grateful to Merck and Abbott for leading the way to grant access to medications for these patients and commend their partnership with the Heinz Family Philanthropies and Welvista during this time of great need,” added Mr. Arnold, concluding, “but we must not sit back. We look forward to additional resources from the federal government. We will only succeed in rectifying this situation if everyone pulls their weight.”

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