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NEWS RELEASE



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Protecting Alaska's Future

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Attorney General David W. Márquez Joins 50 Attorneys General and Consumer Protection Officials in Announcing Availability of Grants Funded by 2004 Settlement With Pfizer Division Over Improper Off-Label Drug Marketing

Attorney General David W. Márquez today announced that up to \$14.9 million in grants are now available as part of the 2004 Consumer Protection settlement with Warner-Lambert (a division of Pfizer Inc. – the world's largest pharmaceutical company) resolving allegations of deceptive "off-label" marketing of the blockbuster drug Neurontin®.

The May 2004 consumer protection settlement that served as the source of funds for these grants was part of a \$430 million global federal and state settlement involving allegations that Warner-Lambert, now a division of Pfizer, engaged in improper off-label marketing of Neurontin. The consumer protection share of the global settlement was approximately \$40 million; seventy five percent of this money will go either into the grant program or toward a corrective advertising program to provide balanced information to consumers and prescribers about Neurontin and similar drugs.

These grants represent the first phase of a multi-phase funding strategy developed by the Special Committee. Phase One of the strategy focuses on drug marketing and drug information through educational campaigns targeting prescribers and consumers. This phase will include several rounds of funding, with preference given to programs that are national in scope.

The goals of this first phase are: 1) to improve prescribing practices by educating physicians, pharmacists and other health professionals about the drug-approval process, drug marketing, and accessing sources of fair and balanced information about drugs; and 2) to enable patients and their families to become better informed consumers of prescription drugs by educating them about the drug approval process, drug marketing techniques, and how to access fair and balanced information about drugs.

Phase Two of the funding strategy will focus on conditions, specifically seizure disorders and psychological conditions, for which Neurontin has been prescribed. The details of the second funding phase will be developed in greater detail as the program progresses.

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Proposals can be submitted by individual states or a group of states or other governmental entities; academic institutions; or not-for-profit organizations that have current section 501(c)(3) non-profit status and have expertise and experience in health-related or consumer protection issues. Non-profit organizations must also submit written support for their request from the Attorney General of a state in which the organization operates.

Requests for Application may be found at www.publichealthtrust.org and at www.naag.org and at the Department of Law website, www.law.state.ak.us. The deadline for submission for these Phase One grant proposals is October 7, 2005. The Special Committee that will award the grants consists of: California Attorney General Bill Lockyer, Florida Attorney General Charles J. Crist, New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper, Ohio Attorney General Jim Petro, Oregon Attorney General Hardy Myers, Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott and Vermont Attorney General William H. Sorrell.

For background - the consumer protection investigation focused on alleged violations of state consumer protection laws that occurred when Warner-Lambert promoted Neurontin for various "off-label" indications. It is illegal for pharmaceutical manufacturers to promote the off-label use of their drugs, although doctors are permitted to prescribe for such uses. Neurontin is a prescription medication approved by the Food and Drug Administration ("FDA") for assistance in the treatment of epilepsy and treatment of post-herpetic neuralgia. Approximately 90% of Neurontin prescriptions, however, are for off-label purposes.

For additional information please contact Assistant Attorney General Cynthia Drinkwater at (907) 269-5200.

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