

CURRENT PATENTS GAZETTE



www.current-patents.com

ISSN 1464-3499

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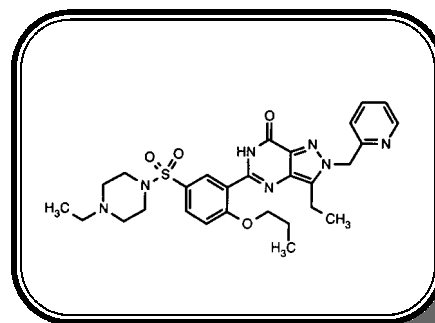
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DRUG PATENTING IN CONTEXT

Current Patents *Gazette* is the most rapid competitive intelligence service covering innovation in the pharmaceutical industry. Patent applications published during the past week have been classified and analysed, in order to place the inventions in context. For the most crucial innovations, those involving new chemical compounds, additional information is given in the form of front page images. These can be enlarged to show details of chemical structures and inventor teams, for example. Applications filed jointly, representing collaborative research, are highlighted, as are sequences of inter-related documents.

Refinements in process technology would seem to indicate Pfizer's interest in the developing UK-343664, the pyridyl analogue of sildenafil with an improved selectivity for PDE V over PDE VI, in the search for a follow up product to the highly successful Viagra (Page 27)



HIGHLIGHTS THIS WEEK

Easter and May public holidays disrupt three consecutive working weeks, in the UK at least, but we hope to maintain near-perfect scheduling of Current Patents *Gazette* during weeks 0016 to 0018 - any slight delays that occur will be due to late delivery of source material rather than any slackness on the part of the CPG team! If you're taking a break from work, have a good time, but be prepared to find a backlog of Gazette scanning awaiting you on your return.

Approved names of drugs in development are rarely quoted in patent specifications, but this week **Pfizer** accords front-page recognition to **sildenafil**, and by way of confirmation adds its better-known trade name, **Viagra**. Helpful though that is, it tends to distract attention from the fact that the same process improvement is equally applicable to a close **pyridyl analogue** of sildenafil, identifiable as **UK-343664**. This preclinical candidate is under investigation for its greater selectivity, being less active at retinal PDE6 receptors and so less likely to cause visual side-effects. This relatively minor process improvement thus serves to indicate that UK-343664 now figures in Pfizer's commercial plans for a **follow-up to sildenafil**. Should it progress, it will in due course be given an equally cumbersome and unmemorable son-of-sildenafil approved name - and before long the race will be on to find a trade name equipotent with Viagra.

Compulsory citation of code numbers would certainly go a long way towards sorting out the rapidly evolving **NK1 antagonist** patenting from **Merck & Co**. Two US process cases this week signal particular interest, and likely commercial potential, in a specific agent employing the now-familiar **4-fluorophenyl morpholine** template. However this compound, first flagged up in a **SSRI obesity combination case**, WO9847514, has a **1,2,3-triazolyl** substituent rather than the 1,2,4-triazolone which has become familiar in such candidates as MK-869. Clearly Merck is not short of promising candidates with this mechanism. Even code numbers, however, are not foolproof, as **Aventis** demonstrates to perfection in the title of a case relating to esters of what we believe to be **MDL-100907**

Schering Corp's WO0020623, or at least its title, was included in Section C of last week's Gazette as a result of an editorial error. We would never intentionally include a systematic name without further explanation. In fact that case should have been deleted, as it turned out to be directly **equivalent to US5919672**, issued in July 1999. At that stage we correctly deduced that the named compound is a **cholesterol synthesis inhibitor**, and we listed the code numbers of several likely candidates, together with the relevant product patent. However, it was our colleagues in **Patent fast-alert** who spotted the correct code number, that of the **phase III candidate Sch-58235**. This highlights the complementary approaches of the *Gazette* and *Pfa*, rapid intelligence being followed a couple of weeks later by a more considered, detailed abstract; users accessing the *Gazette* via the *Investigational Drugs database* (IDdb) are well placed to take advantage of this synergy.

Last week, two European Politicians launched the **SOS Human Genome**, an initiative proposing a moratorium on implementing the European Commission's directive for harmonizing biotechnology patents in the European Union (EU) (Nature 404, 802; 2000). The **push for a moratorium** originated from a report arguing that human material, including genes, should not become private property. The science committee of the Council of Europe's parliamentary assembly adopted the report last week, and the full assembly will debate it in June. The report was prepared by **Wolfgang Wodarg**, a social-democrat member of the German parliament, and **Jean-Francois Mattei**, a conservative member of the French parliament and Professor of medical genetics at the Children's Hospital de la Timone in Marseille. Wodarg hopes the challenge on the directive will force the European Patent Office (EPO) temporarily to stop issuing patents on genes, plants and animals until the legal position is clear.