

Caribbean to Receive Cheap HIV treatments

Former {mosmodule phpinc=ttpopup.php,United States} president Bill Clinton has announced a deal with two major US drug companies to supply cheap HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis treatments to developing countries, including the Caribbean.

Under the agreement, Mylan and its subsidiary Matrix will make available a second-line therapy of four antiretroviral drugs for less than 500 dollars annually.

The four drugs -- atazanavir, ritonavir, tenofovir and lamivudine -- will be sold as three pills, with tenofovir and lamivudine combined into a single pill, at 475 dollars a year. Starting in 2010, the pills will be packaged together for 425 dollars.

The discount will translate to 400 million dollars in savings over the next five years compared to prices usually paid for alternative regimens, the Clinton Foundation said.

In addition, Pfizer is to reduce the price and expand availability of rifabutin, which is used to treat tuberculosis in patients taking second-line antiretroviral drugs.

Tuberculosis is the leading cause of death among HIV-positive patients.

Clinton said that his Global Foundation, which he established after leaving office, had helped two million people with HIV/AIDS access treatment.

"Today's announcement will help ensure we can sustain treatment over a lifetime and better treat patients with both HIV and TB, two key steps in turning the tide of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic," he said in a statement.

The new AIDS/HIV products will be available at reduced prices to governments taking part in the Clinton Foundation's Procurement Consortium across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Pfizer's TB drug, rifabutin, will sell at one dollar per dose, or 90 dollars for a full course, six-month treatment.

The price will be available throughout developing markets in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and the Caribbean. caribbeannews.com