

AstraZeneca Files Patent Suits Over Possible Generic Rivals to Crestor

Associated Press December 12, 2007

LONDON_AstraZeneca PLC said Wednesday it filed patent infringement lawsuits against seven drugmakers that have sought permission to market generic versions of the company's blockbuster cholesterol treatment Crestor.

The lawsuits were filed in U.S. District Court in Delaware against Cobalt Corp. of Milwaukee, Aurobindo Pharma USA Inc. of Dayton, N.J., Canada's Apotex Inc., Par Pharmaceutical Companies Inc. of Woodcliff Lake, N.J., Germany's Sandoz International GmbH, Mylan Pharmaceuticals Inc. of Morgantown, W.Va., and Sun Pharmaceutical Corp. of Dover, Del.

Crestor was AstraZeneca's third-best-selling drug last year at \$2 billion.

The drug has begun competing with generic versions of Merck & Co. Inc.'s cholesterol blockbuster Zocor, which lost patent protection last year.

AstraZeneca is just one of several branded pharmaceutical companies struggling with expirations of key drug patents and subsequent competition from cheaper, generic drugs. In addition, the company has faced the loss of late-stage drug candidates in recent years.

Shares of AstraZeneca dipped 0.9 percent to 2,277 pence (\$46.58) in midday trading Wednesday in London.