

Lipitor® Top Seller for U.S. Consumers

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U.S. consumers spent more than \$9 billion on the cholesterol-lowering drug Lipitor®, more than on any other prescription drug in 2004, according to federal estimates released Wednesday.

Cholesterol drugs in general raked in the most money for their makers, according to the survey by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

Adults of all ages spent more on Pfizer Inc.'s Lipitor®, the survey found. Merck & Co.'s Zocor® was second, with \$4.7 billion in sales.

Stomach acid drugs also accounted for a large chunk of prescription spending. AstraZeneca's Nexium® accounted for \$4.2 billion in 2004 spending while Prevacid®, sold by a joint venture of Abbott Laboratories Inc. and Takeda Pharmaceutical Co., brought in more than \$2.4 billion.

Antidepressant Zoloft®, also made by Pfizer, took in \$1.9 billion in sales to adults ages 18 to 64.

For children ages 17 and under, the most money was spent on Merck's asthma drug Singulair®, \$680 million. Johnson & Johnson's attention deficit drug Concerta® ranked second, with \$490 million in sales.

Rival ADHD drugs Strattera®, made by Eli Lilly & Co., and Adderall®, made by Shire, also brought in more than \$400 million in annual spending each.

The allergy drug Zyrtec®, made by Belgian pharmaceutical group UCB, made \$420 million in sales to the under-18 group.

For Americans ages 65 and older, Lipitor® and Zocor® ranked first and second in total 2004 spending, followed by Plavix®, an antiplatelet drug made by Sanofi-Aventis, at \$1.7 billion.

Seniors spent \$1.5 billion on Pfizer's Norvasc®, a calcium channel blocker drug that treats high blood pressure and chest pain.

The survey did not include spending on generic and over-the-counter drugs, which are far cheaper than prescription drugs that have few or no generic rivals. Many of the drugs in the study are now sold generically.