

Roche, Novartis distance selves from SwissCham statement

At an adjudication by the Marketing Code Authority (MCA), which regulates the local pharmaceutical industry, both Roche and Novartis distanced themselves from the recent statement on intellectual property rights by the Swiss Chamber of Commerce, SwissCham Southern Africa.



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In its media release, which was also a submission to the dti, the SwissCham said that the proposed change in policy on generics would threaten foreign direct investment and the supply of medicine to South Africa.

The National Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers (NAPM), which represents generic medicine suppliers, took exception to disparaging and libellous remarks in the SwissCham document, which states that NAPM's members obtain drug dossiers through unlawful means. The document further stated that the generics industry profits from drug sales.

Adjudication statement

As Roche and Novartis are multi-national pharmaceutical companies and members of SwissCham, and the matters raised dealt with medicines, NAPM laid a complaint with the MCA.

At the adjudication, the pharmaceutical companies maintained that they were not party to, nor had any sight of the SwissCham document and distanced themselves from it. The website for SwissCham nevertheless lists both Novartis and Roche as members, contrary to their statements.

The generics medicines industry in South Africa has been instrumental in using market forces to reduce the cost of medicine and increase access in a developing country such as South Africa. The competitive prices of generic medicines in turn pressurises the originators to reduce their prices.

In a paper released last year, NAPM showed that for every 5% gain in market share by generic medicine companies, the health system and hence consumer saved R400 million per annum, which is a threat to the originators' profits.

NAPM continues to champion the right and access of South African consumers to affordable, lifesaving generic medicines.
For more information, go to www.napm.co.za.

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