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ASTRAZENECA WINS INTERLOCUTORY* INJUNCTION IN GERMANY TO PREVENT MARKETING OF A GENERIC VERSION OF OMEPRAZOLE

AstraZeneca today announced that it has been granted an interlocutory injunction in Germany based on the formulation patents to prevent Ratiopharm GmbH and Merckle GmbH from marketing a generic omeprazole product. Omeprazole is the substance used in Losec[®].

"This clearly shows AstraZeneca's determination and resolve when it comes to asserting our patent rights," says Dr. Martin Nicklasson, Executive Vice President GI Franchise. "The granting of the interlocutory injunction supports AstraZeneca's view that the generic industry uses AstraZeneca's patented technology. We are convinced that many more companies market this product and we are currently pursuing further actions in Germany."

In Germany AstraZeneca markets omeprazole under the brand name Antra MUPS[®] (MUPS-Multiple Unit Pellet System). Antra MUPS was launched during the fourth quarter of 1998 and has successfully replaced the old capsule formulation. MUPS is a new tablet formulation that offers additional patient benefits. Sales in Germany amounted to approximately USD 185m in 1998, corresponding to approximately 4 per cent of total worldwide sales of the product.

The substance patent for omeprazole began expiring in the first countries in 1999. In most countries, AstraZeneca has been granted Patent Term Extensions or Supplementary Protection Certificates (SPCs). This extended coverage for the substance expires in the USA in 2001, in most European countries in 2002-2004, and in Japan in 2004. The product is also protected by patents directed to formulation, uses, intermediates and processes.

* Provisional

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