

GlaxoSmithKline will not file patents in poorer countries

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UK drugs manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline has said it will not file patents for its products in the world's poorest nations.

The step may make some important new medicines more affordable in the developing world, by leaving the way clear for generic companies to make cheap copies of GSK's drugs.

GSK said it would adopt a graduated approach linked to a country's wealth.

It said it would still seek full patent protection in richer nations.

The company says the changes it is making should help people who currently cannot afford life saving medicine.

In the world's poorest countries, it will allow other companies to make generics or cheaper copies of its medicine.

In what it calls lower middle income countries it will continue to file patents but will grant licences to generic manufacturers in exchange for a royalty.

HIV

Pharmaceutical firms are often criticised for not making their medicines affordable to people in developing countries, but the firms have argued that patenting their products is the only way to ensure research for new treatments can be funded.

One exception is HIV/AIDS, where the price of drugs for people in many poor nations who are living with the condition have been drastically reduced.

Sufferers of other serious illnesses though, for example, cancer, often cannot afford the drugs to treat them.

GSK says changes to the way it patents drugs will make its next generation of cancer drugs more affordable.

Recent figures showed GSK's sales rose 2% to £6.29bn in the quarter.

However, the company fell to a pre-tax loss of £416m compared with a profit of £531m for the same period in 2014.

New treatments for HIV, respiratory conditions and meningitis vaccines had sales of £682m in the quarter.

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