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CANADIAN STUDY CRITICIZES THE USE OF “ME-TOO” DRUGS

Vancouver – September 1st, 2005 – Researchers at the University of British Columbia have concluded that governments and plan sponsors around the world are wasting money on expensive “me-too” drugs that offer no substantial benefit over existing products.

Steven Morgan and his colleagues in Vancouver estimate that 80% of the increase in British Columbia’s drug bill from 1996 to 2003 was due to spending on newly patented versions of old medicines. The results of their study were published in the British Medical Journal.

The team looked at 1,147 new drugs appraised in Canada between 1990 and 2003 and found that only 5.9% of them met the criterion of being a breakthrough drug, defined as the first to treat a particular disease or providing a substantial improvement over existing products. The balance of the newly patented drugs were not substantially better, so were classified as “me-too” drugs. These products accounted for 44% of drug use and 63% of expenditure in 2003.

Long-established drug classes that are still generating expensive branded products include ACE inhibitors for blood pressure, statins for high cholesterol and proton pump inhibitors for gastric acid disorders.