

# ETHICS FORUM

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## Patents, Drugs and Social Ethics

The main issue when patents are broken by Governments is the compensation for the companies that develop the drugs for these “emergency diseases”. My opinion is that social ethics demands going beyond the strict letter of the law but it should not exercise potentially damaging policies for the companies that discovered and developed the drugs for those “emergency diseases”. The solution is in the companies that also develop the so-call “life style” drugs and drugs for pets. Obviously, these drugs have a very secondary benefit for public health.

In order to avoid a scenario like the one generated in Thailand that seriously puts at risk further long-term R&D investment and marketing of new drugs, I would advocate for the creation of a National Drug Fund (NDF). The NDF would buy the drugs under the emergency situation to the companies that produce them at a renegotiated price. This should satisfy covering the over US \$1 billion cost of “making a drug” and therefore would not punish the companies for their successful R&D that made the drugs possible. The financial burden is transferred to how to replenish the NDF for further purchasing of drugs. This could be done through mandatory contribution from the profits derived from the sales of the “life style” drugs and drugs for pets.

It is good that the pharmaceutical industry develop drugs for pets (pets can be important for the life of some people). However, I find lack of social ethics to develop drugs for pets ignoring the needs of underprivileged patients. A pharmaceutical company that collects profits from drugs for pets should contribute with a percentage of those profits to the NDF. The Health Authorities of the country would manage the NDF to purchase necessary drugs without having to break patents and without financially “punishing” the companies that produced them with their investment (over a US \$1 billion).

Those companies that profit from drug for pets and “life style” markets would keep the NDF alive and would make their social contribution to the underprivileged with the profits they make from the “over-privileged”.

More on social ethics at <http://www.bioethicsforum.info/>

POSTED BY I. SEGARRA AT 3:08 PM

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