

Drug Pricing Fact Sheet



LANTUS (insulin glargine)

Lantus is a form of insulin produced by drugmaker Sanofi to help with the management of blood sugar levels due to Type I and some cases of Type II diabetes. Over 100 million Americans live with diabetes or pre-diabetes.

Patent Abuse

Sanofi has filed 74 patent applications to prolong their monopoly on this important insulin drug – 95% of which were filed after the drug was approved and on the market.

The original patent on Lantus was filed in 1994 and expired in 2015, but the patent portfolio built by Sanofi could extend protection to 2031 or beyond.

Price Gouging

This is especially true at a time when over a quarter of diabetes patients are rationing insulin because of its high cost, total Medicare and Medicaid spending on Lantus increased 132% between 2012 and 2016, and during that time the average annual Medicare spending on Lantus per person rose from \$1,284 to \$2,431, an increase of 89%.

Lantus insulin also had the highest annual price hikes for Medicaid (over 18% per year from 2012-2016) and second highest for Medicare, a main reason for the massive public spending on the drug.

Competition

Sanofi has built a patent thicket around Lantus to keep competitors off the market, and is an example of the U.S. lagging behind other countries with stricter patent regimes. For instance, Japan and Europe saw multiple Lantus competitors enter the market starting in 2014 – but in the U.S. there is only one product, a follow-on biologic marketed by Eli Lilly.

Historically, having only a single competitor has little effect on drug prices, and this remains true regarding Lantus.

Lantus By The Numbers



Lantus makes \$5.7 billion a year for Sanofi, or \$11,000 a minute.



Sanofi has filed 74 U.S. patent applications on Lantus which could delay competition for 37 years.



Sanofi has filed 1.5x as many patent applications in the U.S. compared to Europe, and three times as many as in Japan.



95% of all patent applications on Lantus were filed after the drug was on the market.

“Cost issues related to insulin use prevent a full quarter of patients with diabetes taking insulin as prescribed.”

– Medscape Medical News, June 23 2018

“Insulin’s High Cost Leads To Lethal Rationing”

– NPR News, September 1, 2018