

| | | | |
|------------|--|-------------|---------------------|
| Headline | US approves new once a day pill to treat HIV | | |
| MediaTitle | New Sabah Times English (KK) | | |
| Date | 29 Aug 2012 | Color | Black/white |
| Section | World | Circulation | 23,655 |
| Page No | 15 | Readership | |
| Language | English | ArticleSize | 138 cm ² |
| Journalist | N/A | AdValue | RM 266 |
| Frequency | Daily | PR Value | RM 798 |



US approves new once-a-day pill to treat HIV

WASHINGTON: A new pill to treat HIV infection—combining two previously approved drugs plus two new ones—has been approved for adults living with the virus that causes AIDS, US regulators said Monday.

The single daily dose of Stribild provides a complete treatment regimen for HIV infection, the US Food and Drug Administration said in a statement, and is meant for people who have not already received treatment with other HIV drugs.

The new pill, previously called Quad, is made by Gilead Sciences in California and “should be available to patients by the end of the week,” company spokeswoman Erin Rau told AFP.

The company said it tested the pill in two double-blind clinical trials of more than 1,400 patients.

Results showed that Stribild performed as well or better than two other treatment combinations, and brought virus readings down to undetectable levels in around nine of 10 patients after 48 weeks.

But some advocates say the new pill is priced far too high.

“We wanted to see (a price of) no more than the current drug,” said Michael Weinstein, president of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, referring to Gilead’s previously approved three-in-one pill, Atripla. But he said the price will be about a third higher than the three-pill combo.

The new drug “is not a significant improvement over existing therapies,” Weinstein told AFP, adding the cost will “severely limit access” to the new medication.

Gilead is charging wholesalers \$28,500 a year for the drug, but said it will provide discounts to state assistance programs and has created a patient financial-assistance program, Rau said.

This is Gilead’s third single-tablet anti-HIV combination therapy, the company noted, adding it is still seeking approval for the newest offering in Australia, Canada and the European Union.

To get the drug to HIV patients in the developing world, where millions lack access to effective treatment options, generic versions are being developed—with permission and help from Gilead—by a number of Indian manufacturers and the Medicines Patent Pool, a non-profit that helps facilitate generic drug-making.

The FDA said further study is required to determine the quad-drug’s safety for women and children, how resistance may develop, and whether the drug interacts with other drugs. — AFP