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## Aussie schoolboys recreate price-gouged HIV medicine

**SYDNEY:** A group of Australian schoolchildren working on a shoestring budget have recreated the HIV drug whose price was controversially jacked up 5,000 per cent by a former hedge fund manager.

US drug company chief Martin Shkreli became a global figure of hate after buying the rights to Daraprim and then raising the price in the United States from US\$13.50 a tablet to US\$750.

Youngsters at a Sydney school decided to draw attention to the scandal and went to work creating pyrimethamine, the active ingredient for Daraprim, an anti-

parasitic used to treat people with low immune systems such as those with HIV, chemotherapy patients and pregnant women. Student James Wood said he and his friends had started off with just US\$20 of the drug, and in one reaction had produced thousands of dollars' worth.

"So we really just hope this makes a point about the nature of the pharmaceutical industry," he told the Sydney Morning Herald.

University of Sydney research chemist Alice Williamson helped the boys synthesise the medicine using an online platform Open Source Malaria.

The pupils "shared the outrage of the general public," Williamson said.

"The original recipe, if you like, to make this molecule was from a patent that was referenced on Wikipedia," she said.

Turing Pharmaceuticals continue to sell the only FDA-approved form of the drug in the US, but reportedly cut the price in half for hospitals after the outcry. Daraprim, which figures on the World Health Organisation list of essential medicines, is cheap in most countries, with 50 tablets selling in Australia for US\$10. — AFP