

The Antidote – September 2014

Welcome to the third edition of [The Antidote](#).

Summer is nearly at an end and whilst corporate activity continued apace, including AbbVie acquiring Shire, Omega seeking to dispose of certain of their older drugs, some of you have been cooling off with the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge! This icy event not only brought attention to this rare disease, but highlighted that the drug development pipeline for ALS needed to be bolstered, and reminded us of the high level of costs associated with drug development, particularly if a drug fails. Let's see whether this innovative, albeit chilly, approach to raise awareness encourages more companies to look to drug development.

Costs remain a challenge that faces this industry sector and seem to have been rather prevalent this summer in relation to a number of high profile events. One of the most noticeable and recent being young Ashya King and his family's quest to seek proton beam therapy abroad. This treatment is seen as very expensive and the NHS only funds selected patients to be sent abroad for treatment. Such treatment should be available in the UK in 2018 for cancer patients. Similarly, a new breast cancer treatment was rejected by NICE for routine use on the NHS as it was regarded as not affordable, and more recently the Scottish Medicines Consortium called it "extremely expensive". Such reactions are disappointing when improvements should be made to enable access to the latest drugs.

A further challenge facing the industry is one of ethics in relation to the largest, most severe and most complex outbreak of Ebola in West Africa with the death toll exceeding 1,500 and continuing to climb. Although there are a number of products in development, there are currently no medicines or vaccines approved for use in any country. However, in August, a committee of international experts convened by the WHO declared it to be ethical to offer unproven interventions with unknown efficacy and adverse effects as potential treatment for or prevention against Ebola. We will certainly continue to see what develops when the committee, including other experts, reconvenes to consider how to set the ethical criteria to prioritise the use of the experimental drugs and vaccines.

In all, an interesting summer, and one that certainly calls for the industry to reflect on its priorities.

To read [The Antidote](#) in full [click here](#).

If you would like to get in touch with me or another core Lifesciences partner, then please do so. Full details of the core Lifesciences partners can be found on the back of [The Antidote](#).

For further information, please contact:

[Sandra Rafferty](#)

London

[+44 \(0\) 20 7367 2804](#)