
From: Office, Press (Finance-Rep) [mailto:Press_Office@finance-rep.senate.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, November 20, 2007 12:45 PM
Subject: Avandia case information sought

For Immediate Release

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

Grassley, Baucus seek information from former drug company executive in Avandia case

WASHINGTON — Sens. Chuck Grassley and Max Baucus have asked a former drug company research executive to provide information to the Senate Committee on Finance about attempts to intimidate a prominent independent scientist who voiced concerns about drug safety.

Dr. Tadataka Yamada was formerly the head of research at GlaxoSmithKline. He now heads the Global Health Program at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Dr. John Buse was a professor of medicine at the University of North Carolina in 1999, when he expressed concerns about the diabetes drug Avandia, which is made by GlaxoSmithKline.

The text of the Baucus-Grassley letter to Yamada follows here.

November 16, 2007

Tadataka Yamada, M.D.
President
Global Health Program
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
PO Box 23350
Seattle, WA 98102

Dear Mr. Yamada:

As Chairman and Ranking Member of the United States Senate Committee on Finance (Committee), it is our duty to conduct oversight of the executive branch, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The Committee has exclusive jurisdiction over the Medicare and Medicaid programs and a responsibility to ensure that the systems intended to ensure the safety and efficacy of drugs are working to protect the more than 80 million Americans who receive health care coverage under these programs.

As you may be aware, as part of an ongoing investigation of Avandia, the Committee is examining the evidence surrounding allegations that, in 1999, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) sought to intimidate Dr. John Buse, a professor of medicine at the University of North Carolina, to dissuade him from continuing to raise concerns in public about the cardiovascular risks to diabetics using Avandia. Based upon documents received by the Committee from GSK and others, it appears that, in your position as

chairman of research and development at GSK, you played a significant role in developing and implementing GSK's strategy for dealing with Dr. Buse's public airing of his concerns about cardiovascular risks associated with Avandia.

Accordingly, to enhance the Committee's understanding of the facts relating to this episode, we would appreciate an opportunity for the Committee's professional staff to speak with you regarding your involvement in these, as well as other related, matters. Please contact our Committee staff to schedule the requested interview by November 30, 2007.

Sincerely,

Max Baucus
Chairman

Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member

cc: Patty Stonesifer
Chief Executive Office
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation