

THE POWER TO PRESCRIBE

HOMEWORK SHEET



Activity 1: Biological research

- Take one of the treatments debated (heart disease, HIV/AIDS or obesity) and find out about the latest developments in this area.
- Are there drug products available that use the mode of action described in this activity? Have there been any problems with the approach?
- Write a brief report describing the illness and how the drug works, summarising progress to date.

Activity 2: A message from the Chief Executive Officer

- Respond to the decision that was made at the meeting with a message to aggrieved stakeholders.
- If the debate opted for the cardiovascular or obesity treatment, write a letter to the British HIV/AIDS Trust explaining why the HIV drug was not prioritised. Counteract the claim that GlaxoSmithKline is putting profits before patients and does not care about the millions of people suffering in the developing world.
- If you opted for the HIV/AIDS drug, write a statement to shareholders to go on the company's website. Address concerns that the company is neglecting its investors by not fast-tracking potential blockbusters. Investors (individuals and large organisations such as pension funds) argue that they need to be confident that the company is protecting their interests by making sound financial decisions and maximising income.

Activity 3: A new healthcare model?

- Pharmaceutical companies are big businesses (not charities) that have to make profits. As such they come in for considerable criticism. Arguably they are no worse than other large companies such as Microsoft or Tesco, which are also accused of making excessive profits.
- Is this 'free-market' approach the best way to provide the innovative medicines that our society needs? Suggest an alternative system that would target the right diseases, lower costs and avoid companies producing 'me-too' drugs. Write a proposal to the Health Minister outlining your ideas.