USHH MERCK MARKETING ANNUAL AWARDS
Nomination Memo

TO: **MERCK MARKETING** **WP37C-236**

FROM: Charlotte McKines 652-2675
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Signed:
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DATE: 1/4/99

SUBJECT: Best Physician Program Award

PROJECT: VIOXX: ADVANTAGE Trial

NOMINEES: Caroline Yarbrough, Greg Geba, Mary Dixon, Leo Mendez, Greg Bell

DESCRIPTION and RATIONALE:

The ADVANTAGE (Assessment of the Differences Between VIOXX and Naproxen to Ascertain Gastrointestinal Tolerability and Effectiveness) trial is the largest ever initiated prior to the launch of a Merck product. The objectives were to provide product trial among a key physician group to accelerate uptake of VIOXX as the second entrant in a highly competitive new class and gather data important to this customer group. The trial was designed and executed in the spirit of the Merck marketing principles, as described below.

First, the trial was targeted to a select group of critical customers. The clinical trial program for VIOXX focused primarily on specialists. While they would be critical to early uptake and advocacy for VIOXX, the large majority of prescriptions in the A&A market (~60%) come from primary care physicians. The ADVANTAGE trial utilized this important group of prescribers as investigators. In addition to gaining experience with VIOXX, many of these physicians gained a highly coveted introduction to clinical research.

Second, the design of the trial focused on demonstrating the value of VIOXX to this important audience. The design was the result of a close collaboration between CDP and Marketing and again focused on a gap not filled by the pivotal clinical program. While the clinical trials gathered data on efficacy and safety of VIOXX vs. NSAID comparators, they did not provide extensive data on tolerability, perceived by many physicians to be as important for patient satisfaction as other more serious adverse events. Also, the comparators for the OA progam did not include naproxen, a commonly prescribed and generically available NSAID. The ADVANTAGE trial encompassed these important criteria in an elegantly simple design that would be possible to execute with a very large pool of investigators.

Third, execution of the trial was of the highest level, involving integration of the field, marketing and CDP. The trial was completed in record time, from conception in January 1999 to first patient in by March 1999. The sales force nominated potential investigators and completed intake forms, allowing a very large number of sites to be evaluated and enrolled and ensuring equal distribution of investigators across the business groups. Weekly meetings were held with the team members throughout the first half of the year to allow any issues (such as slow investigator or patient recruitment) to be rapidly identified and resolved. The team has collaborated on mechanisms for continuing to interact with the investigator population, including a special sample program, interim investigator meetings and newsletters.

Finally, the results of the trial are being carefully tracked. An analysis performed at 6 months post launch demonstrated a significantly higher level of prescribing for VIOXX among primary care ADVANTAGE investigators compared to a control group of VIOXX 99 prescribers (see attached). Feedback from the field has been overwhelmingly positive about their ability to access key customers and the influence that being involved in the trial has had on their perceptions of VIOXX and Merck. Preparations are now underway for analysis and publication of the data, which will utilize key investigators as authors and advisors.