

THE DRUG DISCOVERY, DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESS

It takes 10-15 years on average for an experimental drug to travel from the lab to U.S. patients. Only five in 5,000 compounds that enter preclinical testing make it to human testing. One of these five tested in people is approved.

Discovery/ Preclinical Testing		Clinical Trials			FDA	Phase IV
		Phase I	Phase II	Phase III		
Years	6.5	1.5	2	3.5	1.5	
Test Population	Laboratory and animal studies	20 to 100 healthy volunteers	100 to 500 patient volunteers	1,000 to 5,000 patient volunteers	Review process/ approval	Additional post-marketing testing required by FDA
Purpose	Assess safety, biological activity and formulations	Determine safety and dosage	Evaluate effectiveness, look for side effects	Confirm effectiveness, monitor adverse reactions from long-term use		
Success Rate	5,000 compounds evaluated	5 enter trials			1 approved	

THE DRUG DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESS

The U.S. system of new drug approvals is perhaps the most rigorous in the world.

It takes 10-15 years, on average, for an experimental drug to travel from lab to U.S. patients, according to the Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development, based on drugs approved from 1994 through 1998. Only five in 5,000 compounds that enter preclinical testing make it to human testing. And only one of those five is approved for sale.

On average, it costs a company \$1.3 billion to get one new medicine from the laboratory to U.S. patients, according to a 2007 study by the Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development.

Once a new compound has been identified in the laboratory, medicines are developed as follows:

Preclinical Testing. A pharmaceutical company conducts laboratory and animal studies to show biological activity of the compound against the targeted disease, and the compound is evaluated for safety.

Investigational New Drug Application (IND). After completing preclinical testing, a company files an IND with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to begin to test the drug in people. The IND becomes effective if FDA does not disapprove it within 30 days. The IND shows results of previous experiments; how, where and by whom the new studies will be conducted; the chemical structure of the compound; how it is thought to work in the body; any toxic effects found in the animal studies; and how the compound is manufactured. All clinical trials must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) where the trials will be conducted. Progress reports on clinical trials must be submitted at least annually to FDA and the IRB.

Clinical Trials, Phase I. These tests involve about 20 to 100 normal, healthy volunteers. The tests study a drug's safety profile, including the safe dosage range. The studies also determine how a drug is absorbed, distributed, metabolized, and excreted as well as the duration of its action.

Clinical Trials, Phase II. In this phase, controlled trials of approximately 100 to 500 volunteer patients (people with the disease) assess a drug's effectiveness.

Clinical Trials, Phase III. This phase usually involves 1,000 to 5,000 patients in clinics and hospitals. Physicians monitor patients closely to confirm efficacy and identify adverse events.

New Drug Application (NDA)/Biologic License Application (BLA). Following the completion of all three phases of clinical trials, a company analyzes all of the data and files an NDA or BLA with FDA if the data successfully demonstrate both safety and effectiveness. The applications contain all of the scientific information that the company has gathered. Applications typically run 100,000 pages or more. The average review time for the 24 new therapeutics approved by the FDA in 2008 was 17.8 months.

Approval. Once FDA approves an NDA or BLA, the new medicine becomes available for physicians to prescribe. A company must continue to submit periodic reports to FDA, including any cases of adverse reactions and appropriate quality-control records. For some medicines, FDA requires additional trials (Phase IV) to evaluate long-term effects.

Discovering and developing safe and effective new medicines is a long, difficult, and expensive process. Pharmaceutical companies invested an estimated \$65.3 billion in research and development in 2009.