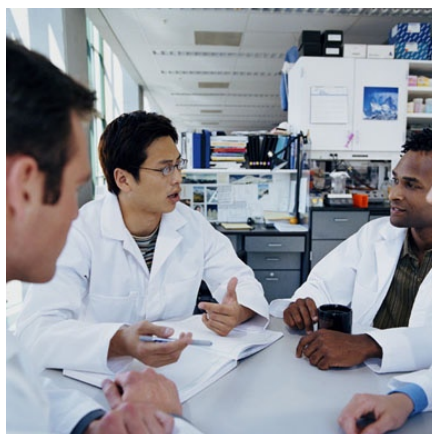


## Informing the Debate on Incremental Innovation

In partnership with the Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development

In the public media, the pharmaceutical industry at large has come under criticism for undue attention to bringing “follow-on” medications to market. These are medications that are



molecularly similar to previously-introduced medications and therefore can be perceived to offer little additional clinical value. Debate on the utility of these medications is confounded by concerns in some quarters that the industry may be misdirecting research resources to easier drug development targets. This may be at the expense of developing de novo medications with novel mechanisms of action, despite recent evidence by the Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development demonstrating that first-in-class and follow-on drug research typically occurs contemporaneously. Nonetheless, negative perceptions about the research-based industry may be exacerbated by the sense that demand for these follow-on products can be driven by excessive marketing efforts by the industry to physicians and (in the USA) to consumers.

Debate on these issues can often be intense and emotional, and perhaps to some degree relatively uninformed. In order to more fully understand perceptions of the value about incremental innovation, Observant LLC was commissioned by the Tufts Center for the

Study of Drug Development to conduct primary research with physicians and patient advocates. Face-to-face and telephone in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with physicians from a variety of specialties, including infectious disease specialists, psychiatrists, pulmonologists, endocrinologists, cardiologists, and primary care physicians. These interviews were complemented by discussions with patient advocates (largely with medical backgrounds) recruited from national and international patient support organizations.

Understandably, results of the research reflected very diverse opinions, some supportive of the industry, others critical. An emergent theme arising from the research is the distinction between the socio-political and clinical perspectives of physicians. Follow-on products are often viewed positively from a clinical perspective – even among those physicians who are generally critical of the pharmaceutical industry. Their primary rationale for favoring incremental innovation is that it provides them with a tool to treat patients who do not respond to a first-in-class medication and thereby enhances their ability to meet their patients’ needs.

The Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development (<http://csdd.tufts.edu>) is a non-profit independent, academic research group affiliated with Tufts University. The center provides strategic information for drug developers, regulators, and policy markers on improving the quality and efficiency of pharmaceutical development, research, and utilization. For further information about the center’s perspectives on incremental innovation, contact [csdd@tufts.edu](mailto:csdd@tufts.edu). For further information on Observant LLC’s capabilities in policy relevant research, contact [info@observant.biz](mailto:info@observant.biz).