

06-Jan-09 16:38 **Allergan's Latisse will compete with non-prescription eyelash products; could find use for scalp hair loss, physicians say**

**Story** \* Physicians say packaging is less user-friendly than that of other non-prescription products

\* Drug to be priced at USD 120 per month

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Allergan's Latisse - despite becoming the first FDA-approved product for eyelash enhancement - will face a crowded marketplace from products that do not require a prescription, physicians said. In addition, some patients are unlikely to see any effect from the drug, they added. Allergan plans to price Latisse at USD 120 for a 3mL bottle with 60 applicators - about a month's supply. While the packaging will be different, the concentration of Latisse will be the same as Allergan's glaucoma drug Lumigan.

Latisse is applied once-daily to the root of the upper lashes, rather than intra-ocularly, like Lumigan. The company is planning a launch in 1Q09.

Physicians, though, noted that there may be more potential for the drug for scalp hair loss.

"Latisse is a good drug for eyelash growth - but it's not going to be the only drug out there," said Dr Joel Schlessinger, a dermatologist and cosmetic surgeon who is also president of LovelySkin.com, which sells lash enhancement products.

"The challenge for Allergan at this point is that there are potential competitors that don't require a prescription."

Schlessinger pointed to products containing peptide growth factors, such as Jan Marini's Marini Lash. "The interesting thing is that there are people who like one or the other," he said, referring to the choice between prostaglandins such as Latisse or the peptides. "But there's no clear cut favorite that we've seen."

PhotoMedex, the listed, Pennsylvania-based company, also markets a line of eyelash enhancement products under the Neova brand name.

Dr Alan Bauman, who specializes in microsurgical hair restoration, said that he was "excited" about Latisse, and added, "There's a layer of increased credibility when you have FDA approval, obviously."

But he noted that Allergan will also face a number of challenges - not least among them launching Latisse during an economic downturn, when consumers are curtailing spending.

Also, "For potential patients, there are the barriers of finding a doctor, obtaining a prescription, as well as filling and refilling it," he said.

Dr Nicky Holdeman, executive director of the University Eye Institute at the University of Houston, also questioned how many patients would have a noticeable improvement - and how long they'd have to wait to see an effect. He said that, using the drug intra-ocularly among his glaucoma patients, noticeable eyelash growth occurs in less than 10%.

Redness and iris pigmentation are possible side effects, he said. "It appears to be a fairly safe drug," he noted, adding that Lumigan's clean safety profile has moved it into first line use.

This news service previously reported that 35%-40% of continuous Lumigan users experienced some degree of eyelash growth.

Bauman noted that Latisse's packaging is also lagging behind that of its competitors, many of which come in what he described as "slick mascara-shaped bottles." Latisse, meanwhile, is dabbed on the lash base with a sponge-like applicator.

"The more difficult to use, the harder it is to keep patients compliant with a beneficial product," he said.

Other eyelash products retail for about USD 120-160, Schlessinger noted, adding that discounts can bring those products down to USD 80-90. "My feeling is that it won't even come close to being a Botox-type drug for Allergan," he said, adding that lash enhancement is not something that most patients request. "It's a unique individual who's interested in eyelash products."

Bauman added that other products typically last longer than a month, and said he would not be surprised if women tried to stretch their bottles of Latisse to make them last longer.

Bauman and Schlessinger both suggested that it was only a matter of time, however, before Allergan began testing Latisse for scalp hair loss. A spokesperson for Allergan noted that the company has not studied the drug on the scalp or other parts of the body.

An ophthalmologist who declined to be quoted, but has done research in this area, noted that prostaglandins like bimatoprost can stimulate growth in resting hair follicles - and that the product has been used successfully to stimulate hair growth in mice and balding monkeys.

Allergan has a market cap of USD 12.53bn.

by Beth Herskovits

**Source** [Pharmawire](#)