

British supermarket says to sell cancer drugs at cost

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British supermarket chain Asda said on Thursday that it is to sell cancer drugs at cost-price and called on its peers who make massive profits on the treatments to follow suit.

The group, owned by the world's biggest retailer US supermarket giant Wal-Mart, said its initiative follows the success of a similar scheme by Asda for in-vitro fertility (IVF) treatments.

The move could save cancer sufferers thousands of pounds (dollars) on the cost of treatments that may extend their lives but which are not always available from Britain's free state-run care system -- the National Health Service.

"The crippling cost of paying privately for cancer treatment has forced many people to spend their savings or even re-mortgage their house to pay for these essential drugs," said John Evans, superintendent pharmacist at Asda.

"We are the first retailer to recognise this injustice and to do something about it and we are calling on other retailers to follow our lead.

"It's a small step in the right direction but our permanent 'not for profit' price on cancer treatment drugs makes them more accessible and can save people hundreds if not thousands of pounds."

Asda said the [lung cancer](#) drug Iressa will be sold by the chain for

2,167.71 pounds (2,508 euros, 3,102 dollars) for a pack of 30. Some leading pharmacies are selling the same item for more than 3,250 pounds, it claimed.

Asda will also sell at cost price the leukaemia drug Glivec, [Nexavar](#) for kidney and [liver cancer](#), as well as Sutent for kidney and stomach tumours.

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