

Sanofi profit soars on lower Lemtrada charge

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Sanofi SA says its net profit soared 26.3 percent in the fourth quarter thanks to lower charges against Lemtrada, its multiple sclerosis treatment.

The world's third-largest drugmaker by [sales](#) reported [net profit](#) of 1.34 billion (\$1.52 billion) in the period. Sanofi's year-earlier earnings had been weighed down by a 919-million-euros charge mainly accounted for by a writedown on the value of Lemtrada.

The Paris-based company sacked CEO Christopher Viehbacher last October, citing a lack of communication with the board.

Interim boss Serge Weinberg told reporters on a conference call that the search for Viehbacher's replacement "is in the final stage" and that a new CEO would be named in the first quarter.

In a statement Thursday, Sanofi forecast 2015 earnings on an adjusted basis to be flat or slightly higher than last year.

The maker of diabetes treatment Lantus said overall sales last year rose 2.5 percent to 33.8 billion euros while net profit increased 18 percent to 4.4 billion euros.

Lemtrada received FDA approval in the U.S. late last year. The company is counting on the drug, which it acquired in its 2011 purchase of U.S. biotechnology firm Genzyme, to offset declining sales of Lantus, which is facing greater competition.

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