

# UK regulator fines pharma firms for manipulating market

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Britain's competition regulator announced Thursday it has imposed hundreds of millions of pounds in fines on several pharmaceutical firms for breaching the law in the supply of hydrocortisone tablets.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said it has levied over £260 million (\$361 million, 305 million euros) in penalties on the companies involved in overcharging the state-run National Health Service (NHS) and rigging the [market](#).

The regulator's investigation found Auden Mckenzie and its successor Actavis UK—now known as Accord-UK—charged the NHS "excessively [high prices](#)" for hydrocortisone tablets for almost a decade.

It also concluded Auden Mckenzie paid off potential competitors AMCo—now known as Advanz Pharma—and Waymade to stay out of the market in order to protect its position as sole provider of the tablets.

Actavis UK continued paying off AMCo after taking over sales of hydrocortisone in 2015, the CMA noted.

Prices of the life-saving tablets rose by more than 10,000 percent during the period probed by the regulator between 2008 and 2018, it said.

"These are without doubt some of the most serious abuses we have uncovered in recent years," CMA chief executive Andrea Coscelli said in a statement, noting they cost the NHS—and therefore taxpayers—hundreds of millions of pounds.

"These were egregious breaches of the law that artificially inflated the costs faced by the NHS, reducing the money available for patient care.

"Our fine serves as a warning to any other drug firm planning to exploit the NHS."

Tens of thousands of people in Britain depend on tablets of the steroid to treat adrenal insufficiency, which includes debilitating conditions such as Addison's disease.

The CMA has fined Accord-UK—and, for their ownership periods, its parent companies Intas and Accord and its former parent firm Allergan—£155 million for overcharging the NHS.

It also hit Accord-UK and Allergan a further £66 million for paying the two would-be competitors to stay out of the market.

Meanwhile for their part in the collusion, the CMA has penalised Advanz—and its former parent Cinven—with a £43 million levy and Waymade £2.5 million.

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