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FDA Keppra Approval Good News for Children with Epilepsy

Landover, MD, June 23 – Today's announcement concerning Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of Keppra (levetiracetam) as add-on therapy in treating partial-onset seizures in children is good news for families whose children have persistent seizures despite their current treatment. More than 300,000 children aged fourteen and under have epilepsy. As many as 90,000 of these children may have seizures that are inadequately treated.

"Getting a child's seizures under control can literally make a lifetime of difference in that child's future," said Gregory L. Barkley, M.D., chair of the Epilepsy Foundation's medical advisory board. "The new FDA-approved indication for Keppra gives doctors another much needed therapeutic option for treating young patients. It is especially important in giving doctors who do not specialize in treating epilepsy greater confidence in prescribing Keppra for their pediatric patients with partial-onset seizures."

Partial seizures arise from one spot in the brain but may spread, sometimes eventually involving the entire brain. These seizures, called secondarily generalized seizures, produce convulsive activity, may develop so quickly that the focal onset is not readily apparent. Some people with partial seizures may have more than one area that triggers seizures. Because any part of the brain may be the site of origin of a partial seizure, symptoms can be quite different in different individuals. Common symptoms of partial seizures include periods of altered awareness often accompanied by staring spells. Many partial seizures begin with changes in an individual's emotions, movement, or senses without altering awareness. These partial seizures are often called auras. While the duration can vary greatly, most partial seizures last about one minute or less.

According to UCB Pharma, the drug manufacturer, potential Keppra side effects include sleepiness, fatigue, behavioral changes, blood abnormalities, and in combination with other anticonvulsants in children, accidental injury.

The Epilepsy Foundation is the national health voluntary that helps individuals and families affected by seizures in coping with the impact of the disorder on their lives. The organization, with its national network of local affiliates, leads the fight for more research, better therapies, the removal of social barriers, and access to quality care, so not a single moment will be lost to seizures.

For more information about epilepsy visit www.epilepsyfoundation.org or call 800-332-1000.

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