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January 8, 2007

The Honorable Andrew C. von Eschenbach, M.D.
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Commissioner von Eschenbach:

I write to express my concern that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may approve fourth-generation cephalosporins for use in animal agriculture, despite the recent conclusion by FDA's Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee (VMAC) that use of one particular fourth-generation cephalosporin, cefquinome, is not safe for people.

Fourth-generation cephalosporins are used to treat potentially fatal infections, including those caused by *E. coli* and *salmonella*. In Europe, where cefquinome has been approved for use in animal agriculture, scientists have noted an increase in resistance to cephalosporins among those bacteria. Given the recent outbreaks of *E. coli* and other food borne illnesses across the nation, it is hardly the time to ignore the advice of scientists, and potentially impair our ability to treat deadly infections.

Over the past several years, the integrity of FDA's drug review process has been called into question amid allegations that your agency has put the interests of industry and politics above science. I am aware that the American Medical Association, the Infectious Diseases Society of America, the Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics, and Keep Antibiotics Working have urged that the FDA not approve cefquinome for use in agriculture because such use may lead to resistance to the related medically important antibiotic cefepime. I also understand that VMAC considered whether there should be restrictions on the extra-label use of cefquinome if the FDA should approve its use. To avoid fueling suspicions that FDA puts politics before science, I ask that you take the reservations voiced by VMAC during its hearings on cefquinome and the recommendations of scientists into serious consideration when determining whether to approve the drug for use in animal agriculture.

I would appreciate being informed by you, prior to the FDA's decision on whether to approve cefquinome.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter

Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress