

## Drug sales propel Abbott earnings

### Humira hikes quarterly profit 35 percent

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First-quarter profit at Abbott Laboratories, which owns the Abbott Bioresearch Center in Worcester, rose 35 percent, fueled by Humira, its top-selling anti-inflammatory medicine.

Net income was \$937.9 million, or 60 cents a share, compared with \$697.5 million, or 45 cents, a year earlier, the drugmaker said yesterday in a statement. Earnings excluding some items beat by 1 cent the 62 cents-a-share average estimate of 13 analysts surveyed by Bloomberg.

Revenue rose 14 percent to \$6.77 billion, boosted by a 54 percent jump for Humira, which was developed in Worcester. The anti-inflammatory drug was approved by U.S. regulators for rheumatoid arthritis in 2002, and has since been cleared to treat six other ailments, including the bowel disorder Crohn's disease and the skin condition psoriasis. Abbott also got a boost from the weak dollar in its international sales.

**“Humira is growing like crazy,” said Damon Ficklin, a research analyst for Polen Capital Management, based in Boca Raton, Fla., which manages \$600 million, including shares of Abbott. “This is another quarter showing diversified strength in this very global company.”**

Abbott fell 56 cents, or 1.1 percent, to \$51.35 at 4:02 p.m. in New York Stock Exchange composite trading. The company declined 12.8 percent in the last 12 months.

Abbott affirmed its 2008 forecast of \$3.20 to \$3.25 a share, excluding some items. Abbott also forecast adjusted second-quarter earnings of 78 cents to 80 cents a share.

Abbott is developing a heart stent called Xience to increase its share of a \$5 billion global market for the tiny mesh tubes used to prop open heart arteries after they've been unclogged.

The Food and Drug Administration should decide in the second quarter whether to allow Xience sales, the company said. An FDA advisory panel voted 9-1 in November to recommend approval of Abbott's stent. The FDA isn't required to follow the panel's recommendation, though it usually does.

Abbott reported \$452 million in global vascular device sales, which includes Xience overseas, a 7.6 percent gain. About half of Abbott's vascular business is outside the U.S.

Humira's worldwide sales were \$878 million and the company said 2008 sales would be \$4 billion. Abbott announced yesterday Humira was approved for rheumatoid arthritis in Japan, a market the company said eventually will be \$300 million a year.

Humira, an injectable medicine, is designed to block a human protein called tumor necrosis factor, which causes inflammation. A two-shot box of Humira costs \$1,559 on drugstore.com.

"Results were strong across each of our global businesses," Thomas C. Freyman, Abbott's chief financial officer, told analysts on a conference call yesterday.

Worldwide pharmaceutical sales were \$3.9 billion, a 14.3 percent increase that was boosted by converting foreign income into U.S. dollars. Sales of the migraine drug Depakote climbed 11.7 percent to \$365 million. Sales of the AIDS drug Kaletra gained 18 percent to \$353 million, and the cholesterol drug TriCor, rose 9.8 percent to \$245 million.

Sales at Abbott Nutritionals, maker of the drink Pedialyte to rehydrate sick children, and Ensure, vitamin-fortified drinks to replace meals, rose 11 percent, to \$1.11 billion. International nutritional products, which account for 47 percent of the division's sales, grew 20 percent.

Abbott said first-quarter diagnostics revenue climbed 17 percent to \$832 million.