

Merck & Co.

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UBS Research

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BACE failed for Mid-to-Moderate Alzheimer's

- What's new? The EPOCH Phase 2/3 BACE study in Alzheimer's stopped
- Our takeaway: Prodromal may work but we have low expectation
- Thoughts on stock: We don't expect much of an impact
- Valuation: We maintain our Buy rating and PT of \$70 based on DCF

Following a recent interim assessment, an external Data Monitoring Committee (eDMC) recommended that Merck ceases the Phase 2/3 study of its BACE inhibitor, verubecestat, for treating mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease. The eDMC determined that there was "virtually no chance of finding a positive clinical effect." On safety, it appears that the eDMC didn't observe anything that would warrant stopping the EPOCH trial; and so the recommendation was specifically on efficacy, suggesting that there may not even be a positive trend. However, the eDMC recommends that the APECS Phase 3 trial in prodromal patients, with data expected in Feb 2019, continues.

Our takeaway: Prodromal may work but we have low expectation

Following the failures of a number of registrational amyloid beta studies (including the recent failure of LLY's Sola), we had low expectations that the EPOCH study would work, particularly as the evidence and past studies suggest that the mild-to-moderate AD patients may not be the appropriate patient population. Additionally, the EPOCH study did not screen for patients with amyloid beta, and so the study may have enrolled patients who may not have had Alzheimer's. We have very limited risk-adjusted sales (more like a small place holder) for verubecestat for this population in our model (~\$100M), and we're removing this now which does not impact our EPS estimates. We note that the current belief is that amyloid beta therapy may still work in the early/prodromal patients, so there is a chance that APECS may work. However, we have low expectations.

Thoughts on stock: We don't expect much of an impact

The failure of EPOCH is disappointing, but expectations in the investment community for a successful trial were very low in our view. The next key catalysts for MRK are the potential approval of Keytruda + chemo in 1L NSCLC (May 10 PDUFA), CVOT from anacetrapib Phase 3 (mid-2017) – for which we have low expectations, and topline data from Keytruda + chemo Phase 3 KeyNote-189 in 1L NSCLC in 2H17.

Valuation: We maintain our Buy rating and PT of \$70 based on DCF

Our DCF analysis uses a terminal growth rate of 0% for the base business and 5% for the pipeline, and a WACC of 8%.

12-month rating	Buy
12-month price target	\$70.00
Price	\$65.66

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Trading data and key metrics

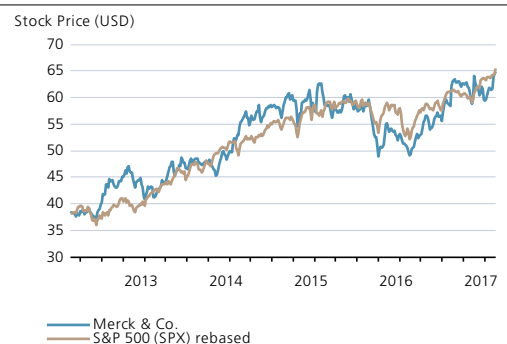
52-wk range	US\$65.66-49.78
Market cap.	US\$182bn
Shares o/s	2,776m (COM)
Free float	100%
Avg. daily volume ('000)	3,274
Avg. daily value (m)	US\$201.9
Common s/h equity (12/17E)	US\$34.0bn
P/BV (12/17E)	5.3x
Net debt / EBITDA (12/17E)	1.4x
RIC	MRK.N
BBG	MRK US

Sources: UBS, Bloomberg

EPS (UBS, diluted) (US\$)

	12/17E	
	UBS	Cons.
Q1E	0.80	0.84
Q2E	0.80	0.87
Q3E	1.10	1.07
Q4E	1.10	1.01
12/17E	3.80	3.81
12/18E	4.30	4.22
12/19E	4.80	4.56

Performance



Sources: Bloomberg, UBS

Definitions of terms and abbreviations are available in the appendix section of this report, and more extensively on internet at www.ubs.com/glossary

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Merck & Co.

Company Profile: Merck & Co.

Merck discovers, develops, and markets human and animal health products. It is a major vaccine provider, with Gardasil for preventing HPV, as well as a player in the diabetes space, and it is becoming a key player in immuno-oncology, with Keytruda, which could ramp >\$4bn by 2020. In addition, we think its pipeline remains underappreciated, particularly in HCV.

Statement of Risk

Our price target is based on a DCF analysis. The pharmaceutical industry is subject to many business risks. These include, but are not limited to, political risks, government oversight of the approval and ongoing manufacturing process, discovery bottleneck and pipeline attrition, competitive developments, patent challenges, and product liability. Merck-specific risks include failure of pipeline products in the near future.

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Highlights (US\$m)	12/14	12/15	12/16	12/17E	12/18E	12/19E	12/20E	12/21E
Revenues	42,237	39,498	39,807	39,562	40,801	42,659	43,577	44,475
EBIT (UBS)	13,694	13,382	13,713	13,281	14,260	15,319	15,859	16,123
Net earnings (UBS)	10,215	10,194	10,538	10,495	11,470	12,444	13,023	13,328
EPS (UBS, diluted) (US\$)	3.49	3.59	3.78	3.80	4.30	4.80	5.20	5.50
DPS (US\$)	1.80	1.80	1.76	1.76	1.85	1.85	1.85	1.94
Net (debt) / cash	(13,125.00)	(21,611.00)	(21,611.00)	(21,611.00)	(21,611.00)	(21,611.00)	(21,611.00)	(21,611.00)
Profitability/valuation	12/14	12/15	12/16	12/17E	12/18E	12/19E	12/20E	12/21E
EBIT margin %	32.4	33.9	34.4	33.6	35.0	35.9	36.4	36.3
ROIC (EBIT) %	24.0	26.3	27.1	29.4	35.0	40.8	46.1	52.3
EV/EBITDA (core) x	8.0	10.7	10.3	12.0	11.2	10.5	10.3	10.1
P/E (UBS, diluted) x	16.4	15.8	15.2	17.3	15.3	13.7	12.6	11.9
Equity FCF (UBS) yield %	3.7	7.3	7.7	6.5	7.3	7.8	8.0	8.4
Net dividend yield %	3.1	3.2	3.1	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	3.0

Source: Company accounts, Thomson Reuters, UBS estimates. Metrics marked as (UBS) have had analyst adjustments applied.

Valuations: based on an average share price that year, (E): based on a share price of US\$65.66 on 14 Feb 2017 18:43 EST

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Buy	Buy	45%	28%
Neutral	Hold/Neutral	39%	25%
Sell	Sell	15%	17%

1:Percentage of companies under coverage globally within the 12-month rating category.

2:Percentage of companies within the 12-month rating category for which investment banking (IB) services were provided within the past 12 months.

Source: UBS. Rating allocations are as of 31 December 2016.

UBS 12-Month Rating	Definition
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Neutral	FSR is between -6% and 6% of the MRA.
Sell	FSR is > 6% below the MRA.

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Buy: FSR is > 6% above the MRA. **Neutral:** FSR is between -6% and 6% of the MRA. **Sell:** FSR is > 6% below the MRA.

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Forecast Stock Return (FSR) is defined as expected percentage price appreciation plus gross dividend yield over the next 12 months.

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