



# Laboratory Corporation of America v. Metabolite Laboratories

Topics Covered: Patents

## **Outcome: Unfavorable**

### **Issue**

The issue in this case was whether a "correlation" between a laboratory finding of elevated levels of the amino acid homocysteine and deficiencies of certain vitamins is a patentable process.

### **AMA Interest**

The AMA opposes the patenting of medical procedures.

### **Case Summary**

The lower courts held that the patent claim was valid and that Laboratory Corporation of America Holdings (Lab Corp) was liable for inducing infringement of the claim when it encouraged doctors to order diagnostic tests for measuring homocysteine. Those courts assessed damages and enjoined Lab Corp from using any tests that would lead the doctors it served to find a vitamin deficiency by taking account of elevated homocysteine levels.

The United States Supreme Court initially granted certiorari to determine whether the patent claim was invalid as improperly seeking to claim a monopoly over a basic scientific relationship. The United States Supreme Court, however, without elaboration, dismissed its grant of certiorari as having been improvidently granted. Three of the justices dissented from that order, indicating that the Supreme Court should have reversed the lower court decisions and found the portion of the patent at issue invalid.

### **AMA Involvement**

The AMA, along with the Association of American Medical Colleges and several specialty medical societies, submitted a brief as amici curiae to oppose the patent.

United States Supreme Court brief