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By a WALL STREET JOURNAL *Staff Reporter*

KALAMAZOO, Mich. — **Pharmacia & Upjohn** Inc. said its Xalatan glaucoma drug received marketing clearance from the Food and Drug Administration.

The pharmaceutical maker called the drug "a new therapeutic approach" for treating glaucoma, a vision-threatening condition in which fluid buildup creates excessive pressure inside the eye.

With conventional glaucoma therapy, patients use a compound designed to reduce such pressure by slowing the eye's production of fluid. Pharmacia's Xalatan, by contrast, works by increasing the drainage of fluid from the eye.

The FDA's indication clears Xalatan for use only in patients who either can't tolerate the current treatment, or for whom the standard therapy doesn't work. A number of patients, particularly those with cardiac or breathing problems, have difficulties with the current "beta-blocker" treatment, and a Pharmacia spokesman said the company sees "quite a large patient base that we believe will stand to benefit" from the new drug.

In terms of side effects, he said, Xalatan compares favorably with the current drug, timolol. But he conceded that the new compound, known generically as latanoprost, has been shown to gradually change eye color in a minority of patients, by increasing the amount of brown pigment in the iris. The eye-color changes, he said, are considered "clinically insignificant."