Patricia Slingo never thought Vioxx could cause heart problems. Now she knows better.

Patricia took Vioxx, a prescription medication, to ease her arthritis. The drugmaker continued to heavily market Vioxx despite mounting evidence that it could increase the risk of heart attacks. After taking it for two years, Patricia had angioplasty, stents placed in her heart, and eventually bypass surgery. Not suspecting Vioxx might be a cause, she continued to take the medication until shortly before it was removed from the market.

"I can't say for certain Vioxx caused my heart problems," Patricia says, "but I wish I would have known what the drugmaker knew." Prescription drugs can provide important health benefits. But those benefits must be balanced with all the risks. Congress can strengthen drug-safety laws right now by requiring full and timely public disclosure of potentially harmful side effects.

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