1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
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3	MAYO COLLABORATIVE SERVICES, DBA :
4	MAYO MEDICAL LABORATORIES, ET AL.,:
5	Petitioners :
6	v. : No. 10-1150
7	PROMETHEUS LABORATORIES, INC. :
8	x
9	Washington, D.C.
L 0	Wednesday, December 7, 2011
l1	
L 2	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
L3	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
L 4	at 10:05 a.m.
L5	APPEARANCES:
L 6	STEPHEN M. SHAPIRO, ESQ., Chicago, Illinois; on
L 7	behalf of Petitioners.
L8	DONALD B. VERRILLI, JR., ESQ., Solicitor General,
L 9	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; for
20	United States, as amicus curiae.
21	RICHARD P. BRESS, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on behalf of
22	Respondent.
23	
24	

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1	PROCEEDINGS	
2	(10:05 a.m.)	
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We will hear	
4	argument first this morning in Case 10-1150, Mayo	
5	Collaborative Services v. Prometheus Laboratories.	
6	Mr. Shapiro.	
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF STEPHEN M. SHAPIRO	
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS	
9	MR. SHAPIRO: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice,	
10	and may it please the Court:	
11	We're here today to urge the Court to	
12	reinstate the district court's decision, which	
13	faithfully applied this Court's precedents under section	
14	101 of the Patent Act. The problem with the Prometheus	
15	patent is its broad preemption of a physical phenomenon	
16	which prevents others like Mayo Clinic from offering a	
17	better metabolite test with more accurate numbers. And	
18	this is a huge practical problem for patients.	
19	These thiopurine drugs are strong medicine.	
20	Too much of this can be fatal; too little can leave	
21	leave a chronic lingering disease in the patient.	
22	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm sorry. I didn't	
23	think that this patent covered the actual machine. Mayo	
24	is free to develop a new machine.	
25	MR. SHAPIRO: Well, what it can't do is use	

- 1 any number from 400 up until infinity, and it believes
- 2 that's the wrong number. And it can't have a -- a
- 3 different standard for a legion of autoimmune diseases,
- 4 and there are dozens and dozens of them. And that's a
- 5 broad field to preempt the natural phenomenon.
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It -- it actually is
- 7 much narrower than that. It's within a range, two
- 8 ranges actually. And so it has already changed one
- 9 range, and that's not the subject of the district
- 10 court's finding that the lower number it's proposing is
- 11 infringing.
- 12 So it's not as broad as you are stating.
- 13 MR. SHAPIRO: Well, you -- you see, Your
- 14 Honor, we believe the correct number is 450 to 700. And
- 15 that's necessary to cure various autoimmune diseases.
- 16 And Prometheus took the position that its patent
- 17 preempts everything above 400, all the way up to
- 18 infinity, it said, for all autoimmune diseases, dozens
- 19 and dozens of them.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, it took that
- 21 position, but the district court narrowed it to 15
- 22 percent, to 15 --
- 23 MR. SHAPIRO: Well, you know, actually it
- 24 didn't, Your Honor. You will see in that opinion, there
- 25 are two rulings: one is the 15 percent ruling, which

- 1 lowers the number; but it said 400 and above all the way
- 2 to infinity. There's no upper limit on this.
- 3 So as a practical matter, there's no room
- 4 for anybody else to offer a metabolite test. And what
- 5 this means for patients is one opinion in the United
- 6 States. If you have one of these life-threatening
- 7 diseases --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It can offer the test.
- 9 MR. SHAPIRO: -- you get one opinion.
- 10 Pardon me?
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It can offer the test.
- 12 It just can't recommend the dosage to the doctor.
- 13 MR. SHAPIRO: Well, it -- it can't have a
- 14 test that has a different therapeutic range, because
- 15 that's a preemption. They take the position --
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Tests do two things:
- 17 they measure something --
- 18 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes.
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And therapeutic range
- 20 does something else. The tests can happen. The doctor
- 21 gets a number. What the doctor does with that number is
- 22 a different issue.
- 23 MR. SHAPIRO: And -- and what -- what
- 24 Prometheus submitted and the court agreed is if you are
- 25 notified, if you are aware of their range when you're

- 1 drawing blood, that's an infringement right then and
- 2 there, if -- if you're aware or warned by their number.
- 3 So any doctor in the United States that
- 4 draws blood and is aware of this range of theirs is
- 5 preempting. And the practical result is we haven't been
- 6 able to offer this competing test now for 7 years.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: When -- when the
- 8 Respondent addresses this, will they take issue with the
- 9 way you describe what has been preempted, or as you
- 10 read their -- we'll ask them -- but as you read their
- 11 brief, is this crystal-clear?
- MR. SHAPIRO: Well, you'll see,
- 13 Justice Kennedy, in the district court, they argued for
- 14 any number above 400. That's -- it's 400 and above is
- 15 what it says. And they said there's no upper limit on
- 16 that. The district court found that. That was their
- 17 position that was accepted.
- 18 JUSTICE KENNEDY: In thinking about what's
- 19 preempted, I looked at the Diehr case involving the
- 20 rubber molding and the constant monitoring. And if you
- 21 could take an analogy from that: let's -- let's suppose
- 22 that there was a system of measurements that you take
- 23 every half-hour which constantly monitor how a drug is
- 24 being retained in the tissues, and that there is a
- 25 protocol for the admission of some two or three

- 1 different drugs to get the balance right. In other
- 2 words, it's much more complicated.
- 3 Is there some point at which that is
- 4 patentable, even though this preempts a -- a whole range
- 5 of -- of different choices?
- 6 MR. SHAPIRO: Well, it may be patentable.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: And it's hard for you to
- 8 answer -- you know, there's a million hypotheticals.
- 9 But I'm just trying to --
- 10 MR. SHAPIRO: The -- the key is --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- see what the process
- 12 is.
- 13 MR. SHAPIRO: -- the specificity. If it
- 14 leaves room for others to have their own tests with
- 15 different numbers and different procedures so that it
- isn't just one test for the whole country, then yes, if
- 17 it's specific enough. The specificity is the key.
- 18 What -- what the Court said in Bilski, of
- 19 course, is that you can't preempt a whole field, a broad
- 20 field with -- with your -- your patent, which this one
- 21 does. And if you look at the diseases that are
- 22 covered --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I'm -- I'm not
- 24 comfortable with that. I mean, it depends on how -- how
- 25 broad it is?

- 1 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes. If -- if you -- if you 2 preempt all the numbers up to infinity and all
- 3 autoimmune diseases, that's a vast field. It's much
- 4 bigger than -- than the field --
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: What about up to 700? Is
- 6 that okay?
- 7 MR. SHAPIRO: Well, no. I -- I think --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: 550?
- 9 MR. SHAPIRO: No. I -- I think --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: 830?
- MR. SHAPIRO: No.
- 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: How are we supposed to
- 13 apply that kind of a rule?
- 14 MR. SHAPIRO: I think doctors have to have
- 15 freedom to make their own judgments about these natural
- 16 phenomena.
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: Above 830 or below 830?
- 18 Which?
- MR. SHAPIRO: Well, I -- no. I think --
- 20 JUSTICE SCALIA: It just seems to me not
- 21 a -- not a patent rule that we could possibly apply.
- MR. SHAPIRO: Well, it's the rule I believe
- 23 adopted in Bilski and in Flook, that you can't wipe out
- 24 a whole field so no one else can have a competing test.
- 25 The result for the public is that these numbers would be

- 1 frozen for 20 years and a very serious person couldn't
- 2 get a second opinion from Mayo Clinic, which uses
- 3 different numbers. That's why we think --
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: But doesn't -- doesn't
- 5 any -- any medical patent rely on natural processes? I
- 6 mean, even if you invent a new drug, what that new drug
- 7 does is -- is natural. It affects the -- the human
- 8 physiognomy in a certain natural way.
- 9 MR. SHAPIRO: Oh, yes.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is it -- is it therefore
- 11 precluded from patentability?
- 12 MR. SHAPIRO: No, it's not. And in fact,
- 13 this drug was patented.
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: What is different here?
- 15 MR. SHAPIRO: The difference is the
- 16 specificity. If you invent a drug which has a
- 17 particular chemical formula, others can invent other
- 18 drugs. There's room for competing drugs in the medical
- 19 world. And you'll -- many, many patented drugs --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: I thought your answer to
- 21 Justice Scalia would be -- and please correct me -- the
- 22 difference is, is that what the Respondent is claiming
- 23 is a -- a patent on the measurement of the result.
- MR. SHAPIRO: Yes, it -- it is a patent --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But a measurement in a

- 1 different answer. I mean, that's how I would have
- 2 answered the question. But -- but that's obviously not
- 3 the right way to do it.
- 4 MR. SHAPIRO: I think that's -- that's
- 5 one -- one part of it.
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, that's another one of
- 7 your arguments, but one of your arguments says you can't
- 8 patent nature.
- 9 MR. SHAPIRO: You can't patent nature,
- 10 that's correct.
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Right, and that relates to
- 12 the question that I asked.
- MR. SHAPIRO: But --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Now, tell me why you can't
- 15 patent nature, then?
- 16 MR. SHAPIRO: Because -- because of the law
- 17 of nature doctrine that has existed for 150 years in
- 18 this Court. Congress has never disagreed with that.
- 19 Pieces of nature can't be monopolized. Neither can
- 20 formulas.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Nature --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But nature always has a
- 23 reaction to the drug.
- MR. SHAPIRO: Pardon me?
- 25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Nature always has a

- 1 reaction to the drug.
- 2 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes. So all doctors -- that's
- 3 part of the storehouse of information. All doctors can
- 4 look at that reaction. They can calibrate it the way
- 5 they see fit. They have different opinions. And it's
- 6 important for all of us that they have those different
- 7 opinions. We found that the numbers that they were
- 8 using were way off for skin disorders, dangerously high.
- 9 400 is the wrong number. The correct number is 150 to
- 10 300.
- Now, it's very important for patients to
- 12 be -- with life-threatening conditions, to be able to
- 13 get that information.
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. So how do
- 15 you -- that's -- I see that. I will spare you the
- 16 reasons why I think the law of nature doctrine exists,
- 17 because they are not relevant to my question.
- 18 My question is, I think it's hornbook law
- 19 that the law of nature cannot be patented.
- MR. SHAPIRO: Yes.
- 21 JUSTICE BREYER: It is also hornbook law
- 22 that the application of a law of nature can be patented.
- MR. SHAPIRO: Right.
- JUSTICE BREYER: All right.
- 25 So in this case, what I think the claim is

- 1 is that we are applying a law of nature. Now, we read
- 2 the words of applying it: Administer a drug, determine
- 3 the level. And then it uses the word "wherein," which I
- 4 will ask them what that means. But -- but -- so they
- 5 say those two words, administer the drug, determine the
- 6 level, are the application of the law of nature that
- 7 they found.
- Now, there's something odd about that in
- 9 your view --
- MR. SHAPIRO: Yes.
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: -- at least. And I want to
- 12 know what.
- 13 MR. SHAPIRO: For us, the real oddity is
- 14 that this numerical calibration that they've given
- 15 extends up to infinity, and it precludes every other
- 16 blood test.
- 17 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Suppose it
- 18 didn't. Suppose I discover that if I take aspirin,
- 19 someone takes aspirin, I discover they have to take
- 20 aspirin for a headache and, you know, I see an amazing
- 21 thing: if you look at a person's little finger, and you
- 22 notice the color of -- it shows the aspirin, you need a
- 23 little more, unless it's a different color, you need a
- 24 little less. Now, I've discovered a law of nature and I
- 25 may have spent millions on that. And I can't patent

- 1 that law of nature, but I say: I didn't; I said apply
- 2 it. I said: Look at his little finger.
- 3 MR. SHAPIRO: Sure.
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay? Is that a good
- 5 patent or isn't it?
- 6 MR. SHAPIRO: No, it's not.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Why not?
- 8 MR. SHAPIRO: It's not a good patent.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: If you can tell me why not,
- 10 I'll have an understanding of where you are coming from.
- MR. SHAPIRO: Well, because you -- you've
- 12 added to a law of nature just -- just a simple
- 13 observation of the man's little finger.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Ah. Now, we're into the
- 15 problem. And that is the problem of how much you have
- 16 to add.
- 17 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes.
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: If you look at the Court's
- 19 cases, they seem to say Flook, one thing, and Diehr
- 20 another thing.
- 21 And so what is your view about how much has
- 22 to be added to make it an application of a law of
- 23 nature? And how would you put that in words?
- 24 MR. SHAPIRO: There are several things that
- 25 it can't be. After Bilski, which reaffirmed what was

- 1 said in Flook, a conventional step isn't sufficient,
- 2 because that's just adding a law of nature to prior art,
- 3 and prior art plus prior art equals nothing that is
- 4 patentable under the Flook decision.
- 5 And also, the step that you add has to
- 6 narrow your preemption --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, excuse me. Does that
- 8 render it nonpatentable because it's not novel? Is that
- 9 the reason why it -- it renders it nonpatentable?
- MR. SHAPIRO: Well --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: That's not what we're
- 12 talking about here; we are not talking about novelty,
- 13 are we?
- 14 MR. SHAPIRO: No, we are really not. What
- 15 the Court -- what the Court said in Bilski is that a
- 16 conventional step plus a law of nature isn't sufficient,
- 17 and what the Court explained in Flook is that the law of
- 18 nature is part of the common domain, it's part of prior
- 19 art. So if you are adding prior art to prior art it's
- 20 nothing under section 101.
- 21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Shapiro, on that
- 22 question and the question Justice Scalia just raised,
- 23 the government, you know, has taken the position that
- 24 you are under the wrong section. It's not a question of
- 25 patentability, but you used the -- the example of the

- 1 finger, you said it's obvious. So why didn't you raise
- 2 the sections that the government says would have been
- 3 the appropriate ones on the novelty or anticipation of
- 4 prior art and obviousness?
- 5 MR. SHAPIRO: That's a very important
- 6 question for the medical community. They need a robust
- 7 section 101 standard because under 102 and 103 you could
- 8 patent E equals mc-squared. That's new, it's
- 9 nonobvious; but you can't patent it under 101 because
- 10 it's a law of nature.
- 11 And it's important to keep this -- this
- 12 common domain, the storehouse of information that
- 13 medical researchers need to have access to --
- 14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: It's hard to resist the
- 15 temptation to peek into the obvious component or the
- 16 nonobvious component and then go back and apply it to
- 17 101.
- 18 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes.
- 19 JUSTICE KENNEDY: You want us to discipline
- 20 ourselves to talk just about 101 in this.
- MR. SHAPIRO: Well, no, I think -- we have
- 22 two arguments on this point. The first is both Flook
- 23 and Bilski peeked and -- and they looked at the
- 24 conventional nature of the additional step, and
- 25 that's --

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: But once you say
- 2 conventional nature, you are saying it's not novel.
- 3 If -- if the step is not conventional, it's okay. Why?
- 4 MR. SHAPIRO: Well --
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: Because it's novel.
- 6 MR. SHAPIRO: -- this -- this is the Court's
- 7 101 analysis in both Flook and in Bilski. So we rely on
- 8 the latest decision, Bilski, which took exactly that
- 9 peek. But the other part of our answer is you don't
- 10 even have to peek. If the step doesn't narrow the
- 11 preemption of the natural phenomenon, if it's just an
- 12 incidental step that you need to use to observe the
- 13 natural phenomenon, which this blood test is, you can't
- 14 see the natural phenomenon.
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: You are getting warmer,
- 16 but --
- 17 (Laughter.)
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: But the -- the words, look,
- 19 "a simple conventional step." Hmmm. You see, whether
- 20 it's true in this case or not, discovering natural laws
- 21 is often a very expensive process.
- MR. SHAPIRO: Oh, yes.
- JUSTICE BREYER: And there's lots of
- 24 investment to be protected.
- MR. SHAPIRO: Oh, sure.

1 JUSTICE BREYER: But they can't, okay? now you are going to say, well, what do they have to add 2 to that? And now we run into problems, because if you 3 have to just not look at the law of nature, don't look 4 5 at it when you decide whether it's novel, that not only runs into conflict with prior cases, but it doesn't make 6 much sense because really the novel thing is often the 7 law of nature. But you say you have to add something. 8 9 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes. 10 JUSTICE BREYER: What? MR. SHAPIRO: Our view --11 12 JUSTICE BREYER: Now that -- what do you 13 have to add? And it can't be that you take the law of 14 nature out and look to whether the rest of it meets the 15 patent criteria. It's -- it's pretty clear in the law and I can give you reasons why, but forget the reasons. 16 17 But look, what do you want to say the rest of it has to add up to? 18 19 MR. SHAPIRO: In our view, the rest of it 20 has to add up to some step that limits the natural phenomenon, so that you have a concrete, specific --21 22 JUSTICE BREYER: You are going on a 23 limitation thing. You are going to say reject all the 24 15 fancy hypotheticals I will also spare you. 25 MR. SHAPIRO: Well, in the Diehr --

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: But it's pretty easy to
- 2 think of the same problem you have, you know, which
- 3 doesn't have this infinity in it.
- 4 MR. SHAPIRO: In the Diehr case --
- 5 JUSTICE BREYER: Which unfortunately we have
- 6 to deal with.
- 7 MR. SHAPIRO: In the Diehr case the natural
- 8 phenomenon was limited with steps that confined the
- 9 invention to a specific machine with doors opening and
- 10 closing, temperature being monitored so a product was
- 11 cured. It was a very specific, concrete invention.
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I -- I don't know
- 13 what -- you keep saying you have to limit the product.
- 14 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But you told me that
- 16 there is a different range for the treatment of skin
- 17 diseases.
- 18 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes.
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So presumably there are
- 20 different ranges for treatment of other diseases.
- MR. SHAPIRO: Absolutely.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So this patent has not
- 23 limited exploration in there. You are claiming it has.
- 24 That's an issue that your adversary can speak to. I
- 25 think they say no in their briefs.

- But the point is, there's still a limit to
- 2 their range. You are claiming at one point they said it
- 3 was limitless, but if we disagree with that --
- 4 MR. SHAPIRO: Well, here's what --
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- how do you answer
- 6 Justice Breyer's question?
- 7 MR. SHAPIRO: Here's what they say, joint
- 8 appendix pages 13 through 14, the second volume. This
- 9 is their patent. This is what it covers. It covers
- 10 hepatitis, lupus, Hashimoto's disease, Graves' disease,
- 11 Addison's disease, diabetes, arthritis; and they say it
- 12 even covers organ transplants. It covers heart, kidney
- 13 and liver transplants. So it covers every autoimmune
- 14 disease, and there are dozens and dozens of them --
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Shapiro --
- 16 MR. SHAPIRO: -- and they do have different
- 17 numbers. That's the key point.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So we -- so do we add up
- 19 all of the diseases in the world, all the potential
- 20 diseases, and pick a percentage that this covers within
- 21 that range?
- MR. SHAPIRO: Well, this --
- 23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I think Justice Breyer
- 24 is asking you for something that doesn't involve that.
- MR. SHAPIRO: Well --

- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That involves some
- 2 greater answer to the issue of limitation.
- 3 MR. SHAPIRO: I -- I think what the Court
- 4 did in Flook and what it did in Bilski is ask if a broad
- 5 field is being preempted. This is broad numerically.
- 6 It goes up to infinity. It covers dozens and dozens of
- 7 autoimmune diseases.
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: What if -- what if they --
- 9 what if they just split up the patent? They -- they got
- 10 one patent number for arthritis, another patent number
- 11 for transplants, another patent number for each one of
- 12 the autoimmune diseases you are talking about?
- MR. SHAPIRO: Well --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Would each of them be okay,
- 15 because --
- 16 MR. SHAPIRO: No, it wouldn't. That would
- 17 be LabCorp, where there was just one malady in the
- 18 patent; it was a vitamin deficiency with a natural
- 19 correlation. And Justice Breyer's opinion explained
- 20 that -- that is too preemptive of the natural
- 21 phenomenon.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah, but what my opinion
- 23 lacked, frankly, and sometimes that's the virtue of a
- 24 dissent in such a case, it lacked -- and Novartis points
- 25 this out very well in their brief -- it lacked an

- 1 explanation as to why what I thought was a patent just
- 2 said, observe the correlation --
- 3 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes.
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: -- why isn't that an
- 5 application of the law of nature? And if you look to
- 6 LabCorp's dissent to find an answer to that question,
- 7 you are better than I, because I couldn't find it.
- 8 MR. SHAPIRO: Well, if -- if --
- 9 observe the -- that's another area of the breadth of
- 10 this patent, because there is no specific action the
- 11 doctor has to take. If a doctor has been informed of
- 12 their range and draws blood and thinks about it, that --
- 13 that is -- that is infringement, and the doctor here was
- 14 accused of infringement, treble damages sought against
- 15 this hospital in an injunction, because she thought
- 16 about this correlation, and she had completely different
- 17 numbers.
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: Is there -- Mr. Shapiro, is
- 19 there a patent that Prometheus could have written that
- 20 you think would have met the 101 test.
- 21 MR. SHAPIRO: Certainly. They could have
- 22 said: When you reach 400, a real number, a specific
- 23 number, you adjust the dosage by 20 percent. That's a
- 24 treatment patent.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: So if they had added a

- 1 treatment protocol that would have been a completely
- 2 different case?
- 3 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes.
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: And what makes it a
- 5 completely different case?
- 6 MR. SHAPIRO: What makes it different is
- 7 that leaves room for Mayo Clinic to come up with
- 8 different numbers that it believes are more accurate and
- 9 more helpful for patients that are suffering from these
- 10 life-threatening diseases. We shouldn't require
- 11 Americans to get one opinion from Prometheus when they
- 12 want an opinion from Mayo Clinic.
- 13 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I think I'm not sure I
- 14 understand that. You said a specific number. But
- 15 suppose it uses ranges, but it also attaches treatment
- 16 decisions to those ranges?
- 17 MR. SHAPIRO: Well, that could be specific
- 18 enough again that others could have a rival test that --
- 19 that used a different treatment protocol. You would
- 20 have to look at that.
- 21 JUSTICE KAGAN: So if the idea --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But then why didn't you
- 23 answer her first question that it was -- that it was not
- 24 patentable? I have the same --
- MR. SHAPIRO: Well, I think --

- 1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I think I am having the
- 2 same problem as Justice Kagan.
- 3 MR. SHAPIRO: I think it would be
- 4 patentable.
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Why can't you just go --
- 6 the hypothetical was -- was one range, one result --
- 7 pardon me, one measurement, one result. Suppose that
- 8 just continued over a range. And they said if it's 40
- 9 then you have this; if it's 50 you have this.
- 10 MR. SHAPIRO: Well, I don't think they
- 11 can -- they can wipe out the entire field so that others
- 12 can't have rival tests that use different numbers. They
- 13 tried to do that, by the way. They have a total of
- 14 eight patents here which use different numbers. But you
- 15 can't preempt the whole field so others can't make any
- 16 use of the natural phenomenon.
- 17 JUSTICE KAGAN: I guess the question -- the
- 18 question I'm asking is, in your response to me is the
- 19 difference the -- the extent of the ranges, or is the
- 20 difference that there would be clear treatment decisions
- 21 attached to those ranges?
- MR. SHAPIRO: I think you would need both.
- 23 You would have to look at it in practical terms. Is
- there room for somebody else to make use of this natural
- 25 correlation, so that they could come up with different

- 1 numbers, different ranges and different treatments? And
- 2 if there's room left then there is no preemption of the
- 3 natural phenomenon. That's a vastly different case and
- 4 that's what is missing here. I -- I do see my time --
- 5 yes?
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How many patents of this
- 7 type are out there?
- 8 MR. SHAPIRO: My view is there are only a
- 9 couple of them. LabCorp is like this, this one is like
- 10 this. The others that are referred to in these amicus
- 11 briefs are vastly different. They are specific patents
- 12 with specific treatment protocols. And by the way, the
- 13 government admits this particular patent is invalid
- 14 because it just attaches a mental step to prior art.
- 15 There are only a couple of them to our
- 16 knowledge that would be affected by a decision in our
- 17 favor. But a decision in our favor would protect the
- 18 storehouse of information that doctors really need.
- 19 They have to be able to look at the body's reaction to
- 20 injections, pills, chemotherapy, radiation; and
- 21 different hospitals have to have different opinions to
- 22 safeguard the health of our people.
- So we urge the Court to reverse, and I would
- 24 reserve the balance of our time.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.

1 General Verrilli. 2 ORAL ARGUMENT OF DONALD B. VERRILLI, JR., ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES, 3 AS AMICUS CURIAE 4 5 GENERAL VERRILLI: Mr. Chief Justice and may 6 it please the Court: 7 Each party in this case has got a valid point. Mayo is correct that you can't get a patent by 8 9 tacking a mental step onto an utterly conventional process for administering drugs and testing their 10 effects. But that is an issue under sections 102 and 11 12 103 of the Patent Act. 13 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Shapiro just told us, 14 when I asked him that question based on your brief, that people need to know up front that this is not a 15 patentable subject matter; very important that it be 101 16 17 and not 102 and 103. So how do you answer his rejection of the adequacy of prior -- as it's relating to prior 18 art or obviousness? 19 20 GENERAL VERRILLI: I think the answer, Justice Ginsburg, is that from the perspective of the 21 22 United States and the PTO, it's exactly the opposite; that importing these -- taking, as Justice Kennedy 23 suggested, taking up the temptation to import a look 24 25 into novelty and nonobviousness into the 101 inquiry is

- 1 going to be very destabilizing; 101, as Bilski said, is
- 2 a threshold eligibility test and the question is whether
- 3 there is a process.
- 4 Here there is a process. It's the
- 5 administration of a drug that changes the body chemistry
- 6 and there is then a test to determine the extent of the
- 7 change and then there is an end of the test. That's a
- 8 process.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: That -- in your test
- 10 for that -- I see on page 9 of your brief you say: "A
- 11 classic patent-eligible process recites a series of acts
- 12 performed in the physical world that transforms the
- 13 subject of the process to achieve a useful result." So
- 14 I have a great idea. You take wood, you put it on a
- 15 grate, you light it, and you get heat. That is --
- 16 recites a series of acts performed in the physical world
- 17 that transforms the subject of the process, the wood, to
- 18 achieve a useful result, which is heat. So I can get a
- 19 patent for that?
- 20 GENERAL VERRILLI: No. It's not novel, and
- 21 it's obvious.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, no, no, no.
- 23 Well, let me put it --
- 24 GENERAL VERRILLI: You can't get a patent
- 25 for it.

1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: That's patent-2 eligible? GENERAL VERRILLI: But that's our -- that's 3 our point, Mr. Chief Justice, that the right way to look 4 5 at this issue is under 102 and under 103, and I think --JUSTICE BREYER: Why? Why is the question. 6 7 GENERAL VERRILLI: Because --JUSTICE BREYER: Look: Anything can be 8 9 transformed into a process. Look at those real estate 10 ones, lawyers ones. I have a way of making a great 11 argument in the Supreme Court. You know, you could patent some of your arguments. 12 13 (Laughter.) 14 GENERAL VERRILLI: Most are pretty obvious. 15 JUSTICE BREYER: Why not cut them off at the 16 That is, if you're really prepared to say -- it has to do with process, not machines. In the 19th 17 century not many patent processes were granted, so they 18 19 are rather special because of the special problem the Chief just noticed. So why not cut them off at the 20 21 pass, if you are prepared to say --22 GENERAL VERRILLI: I'm sorry. 23 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, I will add a little 24 bit to this because I am questioning what you say here 25 in the other direction. You say if you just look at

- 1 everything minus the law of nature, hmm, and that is a
- 2 process that's otherwise known or obvious in light of
- 3 the prior art, you can't patent it. That seems to me
- 4 maybe it goes too far in the other direction, because we
- 5 know that a lot of work goes into these laws of nature.
- 6 GENERAL VERRILLI: Our position is a little
- 7 different.
- JUSTICE BREYER: All right. So there are
- 9 both parts, but I'm more interested in --
- 10 GENERAL VERRILLI: Your Honor, if I could,
- 11 if I could. I do think that one has to think about
- 12 what -- this seems like a straightforward case on these
- 13 facts, but if one thinks about the principles that Mayo
- 14 is advocating and applying them in a different set of
- 15 circumstances I think you will see the problems.
- 16 Take for example nuclear stress tests that
- 17 cardiologists use. That's a process. The patient gets
- on a treadmill, the heart rate gets elevated,
- 19 radioactive dye gets put into the body, it allows an
- 20 image to be taken of the heart with an x-ray machine.
- 21 That improves treatment. Now, the transformation there
- 22 is, as in this case, incidental to the process, it's not
- 23 the point of the process. But I don't think anyone
- 24 would suggest that that's not a patentable process, but
- 25 under Mayo's process it's not a patentable process.

- Similarly I think -- I'm sorry,
- 2 Mr. Chief Justice.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I was just going to
- 4 say, what is the great advantage you see of putting this
- 5 critical question off until the 102, 103 analysis,
- 6 rather than cutting it off at the beginning, 101, which
- 7 I understand your friend to say is very important
- 8 because you don't want people to have to pause terribly
- 9 long to see if this is something they can do?
- 10 GENERAL VERRILLI: As a practical matter, at
- 11 the PTO, Mr. Chief Justice, it doesn't make any
- 12 difference, because the PTO examiner gets a patent
- 13 application and answers every question, 101, 102, 103,
- 14 112, and makes a decision about all of them. So it's
- 15 not going to lead to any benefit at the PTO.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What about
- 17 litigation? It is easier to throw something out at the
- 18 threshold level, isn't it, than to move further down the
- 19 line?
- 20 GENERAL VERRILLI: Not if one moves the
- 21 novelty and obviousness inquiries from 102 and 103 into
- 22 101. You've just taken the complexity of 102 and 103
- 23 and moved it into 101.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I'm not so sure.
- 25 We're talking about summary judgment. It seems to me,

- 1 rough rule, that summary judgment would be much more
- 2 easy -- much easier under 101 than 102 and 103.
- 3 GENERAL VERRILLI: I think this case is a
- 4 pretty good illustration, Justice Kennedy, of why that's
- 5 not true. Think of, if I may pick up on the question
- 6 Justice Scalia asked my friend, think of all the trouble
- 7 we are having in this case figuring out what the
- 8 standard is: How much preemption is too much? How do
- 9 you even figure out the scope of preemption? What you
- 10 are actually doing here is multiplying a whole new set
- 11 of very difficult, complex questions that you don't have
- 12 to answer.
- 13 JUSTICE KAGAN: But, General, I read you in
- 14 part as saying: Don't work, because if something
- 15 strikes you as wrong with this patent, we are going to
- 16 catch it under 102. And I quess I'm not sure why that's
- 17 true. There was novelty here. There were some doctors
- 18 who figured out some new things, which was new ranges of
- 19 effective drug treatment. And so why do you think you
- 20 are going to catch this as a 102 matter? If there is a
- 21 problem here, it seems to me not the fact that there was
- 22 something new. There was something new. It's that --
- 23 it's something else.
- 24 GENERAL VERRILLI: But there was no new
- 25 process, Justice Kagan. There is exactly the same

- 1 process that already exists, with a new inference drawn
- 2 at the end, and that's why you can capture this under
- 3 102. And I do think it's important to think about in
- 4 terms of the points Mr. Shapiro is making, if this
- 5 patent had involved, instead of standard old blood
- 6 tests, had involved a breakthrough new test that allowed
- 7 one to measure metabolite levels in a way that could
- 8 never have been done before, of course the person who
- 9 invented that could get this patent, even though it
- 10 would have the excluding effect that Mr. Shapiro has
- 11 identified. Similarly, if the drug is a breakthrough
- 12 drug and a patentable drug, any use of the drug during
- its patented period, including a use in a test like
- 14 this, would be an infringement under 271.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: What about --
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Scalia?
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: What about the discovery of
- 18 a new physical change in the body caused by an old drug?
- 19 You -- you find that it affects another part of the
- 20 human system. Is it -- is that discovery patentable?
- 21 GENERAL VERRILLI: Well, I think that's a
- 22 harder question, but there are, for example -- and I
- 23 think the Court was looking at some of this in the
- 24 Caraco case on Monday, follow-on patents with respect to
- 25 pharmaceutical products, where you patent it originally

- 1 for one use and then you can later patent it when you
- 2 discover a different use. And in fact there is an
- 3 entire regulatory system set up to deal with that. So I
- 4 do think there are circumstances in which that can be
- 5 patentable, yes.
- 6 JUSTICE ALITO: Could I ask you about your
- 7 argument that the correlations that were discovered and
- 8 that are involved here are not natural phenomenon
- 9 because the thiopurine are synthetic products of human
- 10 ingenuity? I found that a little difficult to
- 11 understand.
- 12 Suppose someone discovers the level at which
- 13 a human pollutant that is present in the atmosphere or
- 14 in the air or the water has an adverse effect on human
- 15 health. Is that not a natural phenomenon?
- 16 GENERAL VERRILLI: The existence of a
- 17 pollutant in the air and its effect probably is a
- 18 natural phenomenon, but the difference here is that
- 19 there is a conversion of the natural body chemistry.
- 20 The metabolites wouldn't be in the body but for the
- 21 administration of these drugs.
- 22 And I do think if one were to say that
- 23 that's an unpatentable natural phenomenon -- and this is
- 24 what I mean about the destabilizing risk of thinking
- 25 about this as a 101 issue rather than 102 or 103 --

- 1 you're going to call into question lots and lots,
- 2 thousands in fact, of medical use patents where the
- 3 patent is: Administer a therapeutically effective
- 4 dosage of this drug in order to treat this disease.
- 5 JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, but this drug is
- 6 patentable because it's a -- what is the third word.
- 7 You know, it's combination of nature. What's the --
- 8 it's a composition of matter.
- 9 GENERAL VERRILLI: Yes, Justice Breyer. But
- 10 those patents are not on the composition of matter.
- 11 Those are process patents.
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: They don't have to be.
- 13 You'd say that where it's a new use there were some
- 14 specifications and the specifications limited the area
- 15 to over here, I think -- and tell me if I'm wrong
- 16 because I'm really asking just a question -- they limit
- 17 it over here, you see. And now we have a new use and we
- 18 are saying this composition of matter is being used over
- 19 here. So aren't you getting a -- simply a different
- 20 area where you are using a composition of matter?
- 21 GENERAL VERRILLI: Well, but that's a use
- 22 patent. That's not a composition-of-matter patent
- 23 and --
- 24 JUSTICE BREYER: That isn't a process
- 25 patent.

- 1 GENERAL VERRILLI: Yes, it's a process
- 2 patent. It is a process patent, and the problem would
- 3 be if one says --
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: All right.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Finish your
- 6 sentence.
- 7 GENERAL VERRILLI: If one says that it's
- 8 nonpatentable because all you are doing is patenting the
- 9 application of a law of nature, you're invalidating all
- 10 those process patents.
- 11 Thank you.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, General.
- Mr. Bress.
- 14 ORAL ARGUMENT OF RICHARD P. BRESS
- 15 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
- 16 MR. BRESS: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 17 please the Court:
- I would like to start out, I think, with
- 19 answering the question about what these patents cover
- 20 and what they don't. And I'm going to answer that
- 21 really not because I think it has any relevance to the
- 22 101 issue. I actually don't think it has any relevance
- 23 to 101. And I will explain that it does perhaps have
- 24 relevance under 102 and 103 and why the difference
- 25 matters, if I may.

- 1 So the district -- my friend is correct that in the district court at the initial infringement stage, 2 before the Court decided the validity of the patent, we 3 argued that the right way to look at our numbers was 4 5 that we were claiming that if a doctor correlated or associated a number greater than 400 with toxicity, 6 that's what we were claiming, that would be within our 7 8 claim. And if the doctor correlated under 230 with not 9 enough drug, well, we were claiming that as well. Now, the district court agreed with that and 10 said that those were the ranges. But then it confused 11 12 things a bit, and that's where we get to the 15 percent 13 plus or minus point. The court also said -- and by the 14 way, I think this is a correct reading -- that when we said about 400, that means plus or minus 15 percent of 15 400, and about 230 plus or minus 230. 16
- 17 And then the court held that there was infringement, but it held it for two different reasons. 18 19 It said that -- that the patent for Mayo -- or the --I'm 20 sorry, not patent, the product Mayo had, which by the way was awfully close -- it was 235 to 450 -- fell 21 22 within the 15 percent on the top side. It didn't look 23 at the bottom side for purposes of this decision. 450 was within 15 percent of 400. And it also said it 24

violated it because 450 is greater than 400.

25

- 1 At the court of appeals we argued that the
- 2 right way to read the district court's opinion was that
- 3 you had to actually do that comparison, that the ranges,
- 4 the 15 percents, mattered and that the doctor, in order
- 5 to infringe, would have to look at the result and say:
- 6 Is this or isn't this greater than 400 and compare it to
- 7 400, or 230.
- 8 The court of appeals accepted that reading
- 9 of it, and that reading wasn't disputed by Mayo, and on
- 10 page 38 of the court of appeals opinion, the court of
- 11 appeals says it has to be compared to a predetermined
- 12 number.
- 13 I think you could go either way on this. I
- 14 think, frankly, the Court could go back to the district
- 15 court and look at that, perhaps. But the problem with
- 16 that is that there was no objection at the court of
- 17 appeals. And I think any objection to how the court of
- 18 appeals understood it is probably waived at this point.
- 19 Now for why it doesn't matter. If there is
- 20 a problem with the broad ranges here, in other words if
- 21 there is a problem with the fact that we're saying over
- 22 400 indicates toxicity, let's think about what is that
- 23 problem. Suppose we are right. I mean, at this stage
- 24 the Court certainly can't presume we are wrong in that.
- 25 So let's suppose that we are right. If we are right,

- 1 then we are simply claiming the fact that we found, that
- 2 after you administer the drug and determine the
- 3 metabolite level, if it's over 400, it indicates
- 4 toxicity.
- 5 JUSTICE ALITO: And that's a natural
- 6 phenomenon.
- 7 MR. BRESS: It is a -- It's according to a
- 8 law of nature, and I will agree with that, Your Honor.
- 9 The term "natural phenomenon" as this Court has used it,
- 10 for instance, in Chakrabarty or in J.E.M. has referred
- 11 to the difference between things that exist in nature
- 12 with the intervention of man and things that exist
- 13 without the intervention of man. So, for example,
- 14 photosynthesis would be a process that is a natural
- 15 phenomenon. On the other hand, cross-breeding plants to
- 16 create a new variety, that wasn't the natural
- 17 phenomenon.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Yes, but if photosynthesis
- 19 is induced by a lamp inside a building, then it's not a
- 20 natural phenomenon?
- 21 MR. BRESS: I think you could probably get a
- 22 patent. I think you could get a patent, Your Honor, on
- 23 the use of a lamp to induce photosynthesis, but you
- 24 couldn't claim the underlying process, is all I'm
- 25 saying, of photosynthesis.

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: I thought of two examples
- 2 that will try to get you to talk about the problem
- 3 that's really bothering me here, anyway.
- 4 MR. BRESS: I would love to, Your Honor.
- 5 JUSTICE BREYER: Well. A patent for --
- 6 we've discovered, at some extent, what counts as too
- 7 little fertilizer and what counts as too much to make
- 8 plants grow, a certain kind of fertilizer, very common.
- 9 Less than an quarter of an inch, forget it; more than
- 10 half an inch, you are going to burn the plant.
- 11 Imagine that. Law of nature, absolutely,
- 12 about the chemicals in the fertilizer. Patent: A
- 13 method for determining when there is too little or too
- 14 much fertilizer. Put some fertilizer in a field and
- 15 measure how much there is, wherein less than a quarter
- 16 of an inch is too little and wherein more than half an
- 17 inch is too much.
- 18 Second example. Einstein never lived, but
- 19 at vast expense you invented E equals mc-squared, a
- 20 method for measuring energy which is very useful that
- 21 comes out of a cyclotron. Put some stuff in a
- 22 cyclotron, measure the stuff in and measure how much
- 23 comes out, and keep -- wherein, wherein, the missing
- 24 part is -- think about -- wherein -- it says: Wherein
- 25 the missing part will be calculated as an amount of

- 1 energy according to a formula E equals mc-squared.
- If your patent is valid, why aren't the two
- 3 I just mentioned? And if you -- if the two I just
- 4 mentioned are valid, there is something wrong with this
- 5 picture.
- 6 MR. BRESS: Okay, You Honor. I will answer
- 7 them in turn and then hopefully I'll get back to my
- 8 range and explain what the 102 and 103 problems are with
- 9 that for you all as well.
- The first patent you've discussed, which is
- 11 how best to use fertilizer essentially for plants.
- 12 Patent-eligible subject matter, but clearly novel and
- 13 novel in a way that you could get rid of on summary
- 14 judgment just as fast as you could get rid of it on 101.
- 15 There is no advantage, in other words, to saying: I am
- 16 going to label my summary judgment motion 101 and import
- 17 lack of novelty into that versus saying I'm going to
- 18 label --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: Where is lack of novelty?
- 20 Nobody has these numbers before. They always thought it
- 21 was a quarter, an eighth of an inch. It's huge novelty.
- MR. BRESS: Your Honor, the law, as you well
- 23 know, recognizes that under section 103, if something
- 24 would have been obvious to someone with ordinary skill
- 25 in the art --

- JUSTICE BREYER: I mean, my point -- assume
- 2 with me the eighth versus quarter of an inch which is
- 3 the law of nature part is not obvious.
- 4 MR. BRESS: Your Honor, the first person who
- 5 came up 10,000 years ago with the best way to do -- to
- 6 use fertilizer in a way that nobody had ever done before
- 7 would presumably get it. If your question is at what
- 8 level of sort of microns you can draw a line between
- 9 obviousness and novelty, there are questions of fact
- 10 embedded in that.
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no. My question is,
- 12 what has to be added to a law of nature to make it a
- 13 patentable process?
- MR. BRESS: To make --
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: And if you put too little
- 16 in the answer to that question, I believe I can take
- 17 things that like E equals mc-squared and make them
- 18 patentable. And if you put too much in, you are going
- 19 to wreck your own case.
- MR. BRESS: Your Honor, I will try very hard
- 21 not to do either.
- Your Honor, this Court has looked at two
- 23 different ways to try to limit what are laws of nature,
- 24 abstract ideas, etcetera. One way it has looked at is
- 25 to say we need something physical; it has to be in the

- 1 world. In other words, you have to move things, you've
- 2 got to transform them, you have to apply machinery to
- 3 them, that sort of thing. So we just know off the bat
- 4 you are not literally claiming just a principle in the
- 5 air.
- 6 So in your example, if you used, you know,
- 7 machines, implements, et cetera, to do it, at least we
- 8 would know that much. I think the problem that Your
- 9 Honor's raising is more in the second stage, which is,
- 10 okay, it isn't just a mere principle. I get that. But
- 11 are we as a practical matter preempting an abstract idea
- in such a way that we are going to too greatly suppress
- 13 follow-on invention. And the classic example of that,
- 14 Your Honor, is the Morse case, of course.
- 15 In Morse there were two different claims
- 16 that were being discussed, actually eight different
- 17 claims being discussed. But one of the claims had to do
- 18 with the actual invention of how you can make a
- 19 telegraph work. And Morse described a working telegraph
- 20 system and he got a patent for that.
- 21 And the second one that he tried to claim
- 22 was the use of electricity to write at a distance. And
- 23 the reason he didn't get that one is that it was
- 24 expressed at such a level -- high level of abstraction,
- 25 that it would preempt many, many things that he had

- 1 never invented and never thought of. In fact, the
- 2 Court's words were wonderful in that case:
- 3 "For aught we now know," the Court said, somebody may
- 4 come up with wonderful inventions in the future. And of
- 5 course now we have the fax machine, e-mail, et cetera.
- 6 That's the right way to think about it, which is, is
- 7 the -- for the second step, which is, is what's being
- 8 claimed at such a high level of generality that it's
- 9 going to inhibit future innovation.
- 10 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Why couldn't someone come
- 11 up with the idea that at a level which is in the range
- 12 that is within your patent, that if at a certain level
- 13 for a certain -- a person of a certain age, you
- 14 administer a new drug, you have a new result? Why isn't
- 15 that like the fax machine?
- 16 MR. BRESS: Your Honor, in that case they
- 17 could get an improvement patent on it, first of all, no
- 18 question about it, that they could apply for an
- 19 improvement patent.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But the --
- MR. BRESS: They're building on it.
- 22 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- Petitioner is saying
- 23 that if you think about that, it's an infringement.
- 24 MR. BRESS: Well, there's a -- let me
- 25 explain why I think there is not a problem with that,

- 1 Your Honor. If you looked at the process for
- 2 vulcanizing rubber, which Firestone patented many, many
- 3 years ago, that involved you heat India rubber to a high
- 4 temperature, you add sulfur and mineral salts, and that
- 5 way you cure rubber into a usable way of using it.
- Now, many years later in Diehr this Court
- 7 looked at an improved process, if you will, for making
- 8 rubber which involved continuous measurement and the use
- 9 of the Arrhenius equation to know when the rubber was
- 10 cured. Now, there is no doubt that if somebody came out
- 11 with a second one 10 years after Firestone had gotten
- 12 the patent on vulcanization, they would have had to pay
- 13 patent royalties for 10 years before their second one
- 14 would have been free of patent royalties, right, because
- 15 they would have had to respect the patent that Firestone
- 16 got.
- 17 So the simple fact, in other words, that
- 18 there may be further improvements to what you've done
- 19 isn't where the court has ever drawn the line. And I do
- 20 think that in conceptualizing where to draw these lines,
- 21 because at the edges they're indeterminant, they're
- 22 elusive and they're going to be somewhat arbitrary.
- 23 This is judge-made law. I think that what you've got to
- 24 look to is what you've done before.
- 25 And if we take this case in the spectrum of

- 1 what this Court has looked at, where you've got Morse on
- one side, on that same side you've got Benson, which was
- 3 simply a formula for converting binary coded decimals to
- 4 pure binary, which the court said you could use for an
- 5 infinite number of uses. It was way too broad.
- 6 If you look at Bilski, a general way of -- a
- 7 general -- the concept of hedging. Now Bilski was
- 8 limited, admittedly and this Court discussed it and
- 9 said, well, they tried to limit it with the conventional
- 10 step of having the inputs determined by random analysis
- 11 techniques. I would like to focus on that for a second,
- 12 because the Court said that was not significant extra
- 13 solution activity. It wasn't enough to either render
- 14 the process a physical one in the world or to narrow its
- 15 scope. Well, why is that?
- 16 Because random analysis techniques are
- 17 themselves just an abstract idea. So you were adding
- 18 one abstract idea to another one and it's no wonder that
- 19 the Court found that it didn't narrow it to a patentable
- 20 scope.
- Now on the other side of the line we have
- 22 cases Tilghman. Now if you look at Tilghman, Tilghman
- 23 was a patent on the fact that if you use water at a high
- 24 heat and high pressure, you can separate out from fat
- 25 bodies, the fatty acids on the one hand and the glycerin

- 1 on the other. And this Court approved a process -- a
- 2 patent process on that. Now that's of course a natural
- 3 law, Justice Alito, no question about it, in terms of is
- 4 it a law of nature that makes you do that, yes.
- 5 But the Court was comforted in that case by
- 6 the fact that the patent wasn't trying to generally
- 7 patent monopolize the idea that water at high pressure
- 8 and temperature is going to in general break bonds of
- 9 chemicals. And it wasn't trying to either monopolize
- 10 the whole idea of how you can separate fat acids and
- 11 glycerin from fat bodies. There are other ways,
- 12 including the use of sulfuric acid.
- 13 Let's place this case in the continuum.
- 14 Now, we are not trying to pass the general broad idea
- 15 that you can use metabolite readings after you
- 16 administer the drug to determine what the likely, what
- 17 the best level of the next administration might be.
- 18 That would be kind of like the Morse patent, and that's
- 19 not what we are doing. What we are talking about here
- 20 is A, a very specific class of drugs, the thiopurines
- 21 used for --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: But, Mr. Bress, here's what
- 23 you have not done. What you haven't done is say at a
- 24 certain number you should use a certain treatment, at
- 25 another number you should use another treatment. I

- 1 guess the first question is why didn't you file a patent
- 2 like that? Because that clearly would have been
- 3 patentable. Everybody agrees with that.
- 4 MR. BRESS: I agree it would, Your Honor.
- 5 Two responses if I may.
- 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: And I think that the
- 7 difference that people are noting or some people are
- 8 noting is that this is not a treatment protocol, it's
- 9 not a treatment regimen, all you have done is pointed
- 10 out a set of facts that exist in the world, that exist
- in the world, and are claiming protection for something
- 12 that anybody can try to make use of in any way and you
- 13 are saying you have to pay us.
- 14 MR. BRESS: Right. Your Honor, I don't
- 15 agree with that description, but let me explain --
- 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: I thought you might not.
- 17 MR. BRESS: -- why. All right, Your Honor,
- 18 first of all most of the claims here have three steps.
- 19 So you have an administering step which clearly carries
- 20 its own benefits with it. It's not novel, but it's
- 21 certainly a process step that in and of itself could be
- 22 a process. We couple that with determining -- you
- 23 determine the amount of metabolites and the next step
- 24 gives the doctor valuable information in order to decide
- 25 what to do next.

- Now why didn't we say, if it's over 400 you
 must decrease because that doesn't correspond with how
 doctors practice medicine, Your Honor. So for example,
- 4 you've got a patient for whom you've got a particularly
- 5 sharp outbreak of Crohn's disease. You may well be
- 6 willing to go above the normal 400 level if your other
- 7 tests, your liver toxicities and your white blood cell
- 8 counts etc., tell you that for this patient at this time
- 9 given that condition I am willing to risk some
- 10 additional toxicity.
- On the lower end of the scale you may have
- 12 somebody under 230 who seems to be improving, they seem
- 13 to be moving towards remission, why push it, why
- 14 increase. And this is not unusual. And that's one of
- 15 the things I think I've got to stress here is the notion
- 16 of a patent only in the end producing information is old
- in this country. And by the way to produce the
- 18 information you are always going to have a step at the
- 19 end that is some kind of an algorithm. Like a very
- 20 simple one. But it takes the data, the raw data and
- 21 turns it into something useful.
- So for example, in the 19th century there
- 23 were patents on the use of electricity to locate veins
- 24 of ore and valuable minerals in the ground. Now that
- 25 patent didn't say after you found it, you have got to

- 1 dig it out. And according to Mayo, that would have to
- 2 be the next step. But of course you might have reasons
- 3 for digging it out or not digging it out depending on
- 4 your finances, depending on how deep it is and depending
- 5 on what kind of ore it is, etc.
- 6 There were patents on how to navigate your
- 7 boat in the fog, it was a primitive sonar based method.
- 8 And it didn't tell you in the end you had must steer
- 9 your boat to X and go there. It just told you a likely
- 10 way to go. There was not --
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: What about a process that
- 12 all the steps are -- it's a process to -- to generate
- 13 some useful information.
- MR. BRESS: Yes.
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: Fine. And the only new
- 16 thing about it is the useful information.
- 17 MR. BRESS: Yes.
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: Anything like that in
- 19 history, any patent case that comes to mind that you say
- 20 that was okay? Can you think of one?
- 21 MR. BRESS: Actually, Your Honor, yes.
- JUSTICE BREYER: What? Good. That's what I
- 23 would like to know.
- 24 MR. BRESS: Certainly. For example, there
- 25 was a patent on the -- and I can talk about modern ones

- 1 too, of course, but a patent on how to find the -- where
- 2 there is a leak in a water main and it was using
- 3 vibration of --
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no. That's not what
- 5 I'm thinking of. I'm thinking of a patent to find
- 6 useful information that chickens can only eat so much
- 7 chicken food. That nobody has ever known before, you
- 8 know. Okay. Now there's something like that. But they
- 9 tell you the useful information that's going to be found
- 10 right in the patent. In other words, we have a patent
- 11 to discover some useful information and here is the
- 12 useful information. And now here's -- see, that's what
- 13 they're complaint --
- 14 MR. BRESS: I'm not sure that I am
- 15 understanding, Your Honor, because the patent that tells
- 16 you where to find the ore is telling you what you're
- 17 going to --
- JUSTICE BREYER: But you don't know what you
- 19 are going to find because you don't know how much ore
- 20 you are going to find? Let's see, okay. Let me think
- 21 about it.
- MR. BRESS: Well, and if we talk about
- 23 modern days because I think it's helpful now to move
- 24 this forward, the court has never suggested that there
- 25 is an extra statutory limitation that prevents patents

- on developing useful information, even if they have a
- 2 mental step at the end. And what do we have today?
- 3 We've got inventions out there that through
- 4 identification of biomarkers or measuring the biomarkers
- 5 allow us to know which of 10 particular cancer drugs is
- 6 going to work for a particular patient.
- 7 We have got patents on methods that allow us
- 8 to identify the likely location and size of the next
- 9 earthquake in the San Andreas fault. We have got
- 10 patents that allow us to determine where there is a
- 11 crack and what type of crack in a nuclear reactor core.
- Now, according to Mayo, because all of these
- 13 patents end with a mental step that produces
- 14 information, they're no good. Or perhaps if you look at
- 15 them and say everything up to that algorithm at the end
- is old, you can't get a patent because you lack novelty.
- Now, it may be to -- it may be in fact,
- 18 depending on the particular invention, that you should
- 19 lose for lack of novelty on one or other of those, or
- 20 that you should lose for lack -- for obviousness.
- 21 But under 101, these are precisely --
- JUSTICE BREYER: What's your view? What's
- 23 your view?
- 24 MR. BRESS: Okay, Your Honor, I'm happy to
- 25 address that, too. The answer is no, and here's why.

- JUSTICE BREYER: You should not lose it.

 MR. BRESS: You should not lose. And this
- 4 So in our case, what existed before in the

is why -- and I'll use my case as a wonderful example.

- 5 prior art, so to speak, was people knew that you could
- 6 administer thiopurines for these particular diseases,
- 7 and by the way, they're not all diseases, just -- we do
- 8 specifically exclude in these patents, for example,
- 9 Host-versus-graft disease. We exclude leukemia, et
- 10 cetera. They're not in the asserted patents in this
- 11 case.

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- But in any event, administration of
- 13 thiopurines to address certain diseases: old in the
- 14 art. Different methods for finding analytes in blood
- 15 cells such as high pressure liquid chromatography? Old
- 16 in the art, no doubt.
- 17 They were used together before we did them,
- 18 but why were they used? They were used by people who
- 19 were trying to come up with what we came up with. They
- 20 weren't doing it for fun. They were administering.
- 21 They were determining in order to try to find a new
- 22 treatment method, a new way of calibrating the right
- 23 dose for each individual patient based on their
- 24 metabolism, and help seriously ill patients.
- 25 And the idea that we are not novel because

- 1 people took some of the same steps along the way to
- 2 invention that we actually succeeded in is wrong. And
- 3 in fact, this Court said so in American Wood-Paper,
- 4 where it said that "incomplete and unsuccessful attempts
- 5 to invent will not render not novel the successful
- 6 inventor."
- 7 And in Bell, the Court said the difference
- 8 between those who -- those who did not get the patents
- 9 in Bell was only the difference between failure and
- 10 success, and didn't say that because many of them had
- 11 used similar methods but had not understood that
- 12 continuous electrical lines as opposed to intermittent
- 13 or pulsing electrical lines was going to be the
- 14 difference for a working telephone.
- 15 Similar here. I don't think we ought to
- 16 lose on novelty to that ground. But let's put that to
- 17 the side, because that's for remand, and it's something
- 18 that hopefully --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: Suppose somebody thinks
- 20 you're wrong, that the numbers you've come up with are
- 21 wrong. And they want to develop better numbers that
- 22 will -- will help the medical profession. Your -- your
- 23 patent occludes them from doing that. Am I right?
- MR. BRESS: No, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: No?

- 1 MR. BRESS: And let's explain why not. And
- 2 I will even take for purposes of this explanation my
- 3 brother's example of over 400 and under 230, because I
- 4 don't think it matters. So you've got Dr. el-Azhary,
- 5 who believes that the right ceiling level is 300. Okay?
- 6 So if she sees a patient and says, "I'm going to -- you
- 7 know, I associate 290 with toxicity," that won't violate
- 8 our patent in the least.
- 9 Our patent says if you associate over 400
- 10 with toxicity, that's within our range. If she
- 11 associates 290 with toxicity, no violation.
- Now, getting more to the point, though, if
- 13 we're totally wrong -- let's assume we're off base
- 14 and -- and this doesn't work at all. There's another
- 15 participant of section 101 that addresses that, and
- 16 that's utility.
- 17 And certainly Mayo would be able to come
- 18 into court and say that patent has no utility, it's
- 19 completely wrong. In fact it's killing patients. And
- 20 try to invalidate us on that ground. Similarly, suppose
- 21 at the very edges of the spectrums that we're claiming,
- 22 the answer is obvious, the answer is not novel. They
- 23 can seek to try to invalidate our patents on that basis
- 24 as well.
- This -- these aren't 101 problems.

- Well, it seems to me 1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: 2 that's your -- the problem with your whole approach is that every time you're pressed on 101, your answer is to 3 fall back to 102 or 103 or the utility part of 101. And 4 5 I'm just wondering why it's beneficial to essentially eliminate 101 and say oh, we'll catch everything later 6 7 on. 8 Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice; I MR. BRESS: 9 appreciate the question. I -- I think that the answer is that when 10 the problem is lack of novelty, when the problem is 11 12 obviousness, the right place to go are the sections that 13 actually have very clear rules on how to apply those, 14 and that the problem with taking a short cut in that instance is, essentially, the Court would just imbue its 15 own notions or pre-conceived notions of what should be 16 17 patentable and pour it into it as opposed to following those rules. 18 And of course, if you're going to follow 19 these rules, you might as well follow them under that 20 section. Now, it doesn't completely leave 101 bereft. 21 22 This Court has said 101's very broad, but it does have limitations. 23
- 24 And if you look at a case like Morse -25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, just as -- I'm

- 1 sorry to interrupt. Your friend's point is that if you
- 2 don't do this -- if you don't give 101 some more
- 3 content, then the doctor is going to have to start
- 4 worrying right from the get-go, and they say well, is
- 5 there an exception that I might be able to rely on, as
- 6 opposed to being able to say right away this -- I don't
- 7 have to worry about this patient; I can treat the
- 8 patient in this way.
- 9 MR. BRESS: Well, Your Honor, again, if --
- 10 if it's very clear that we're not novel. For example,
- 11 if -- if the government is correct here that facially,
- 12 we lack novelty, it's no harder to proceed under 102 to
- 13 achieve that goal than it is under 101. If you're going
- 14 to proceed under 101, then we'll talk about principles
- 15 that 101 speaks to.
- 16 So 101 -- I think the primary -- the two
- 17 things explored: it has to be a process in the physical
- 18 world, a hands-on process. And it can't be so broad
- 19 that it preempts all follow-on innovation. Those are
- 20 the two things -- you know, this Court speaks about
- 21 statutory language, and it has to do some work.
- 22 That's the work that --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So that's novel. What's
- 24 your answer about why this is novel?
- MR. BRESS: Right. Your Honor, before

- 1 Prometheus -- actually, the inventors in this case in
- 2 Montreal came up with this method -- doctors had no way
- 3 to tailor for each individual based on their metabolism
- 4 the right dosage of these powerful but potentially toxic
- 5 drugs.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 7 Mr. Shapiro, you have 4 minutes remaining.
- 8 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF STEPHEN M. SHAPIRO
- 9 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
- 10 MR. SHAPIRO: Justice Scalia asked the
- 11 critical question here: what if you think these numbers
- 12 are wrong? What happens with patients around the
- 13 country? Well, that's just what we concluded: these
- 14 numbers were wrong. They say you go up to 400, and
- 15 above 400, it's bad, it's harmful. We found that the
- 16 right range was 450 up to 700 -- and sometimes above
- 17 700 -- to cure some of these very serious diseases.
- 18 And that different opinion was blockaded by
- 19 this treble damages lawsuit, and request for an
- 20 injunction.
- 21 So the -- the wrong information is --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: He says the solution to
- 23 that is that -- you're saying their patent is not
- 24 useful. That would be your defense.
- MR. SHAPIRO: It's important that 101 be the

- 1 robust test here. This is the only provision under
- 2 which this Court has issued decision after decision for
- 3 150 years protecting the public domain. It's not some
- 4 rough gauge; it's the critical test defining what's in
- 5 the storehouse of information for medical researchers to
- 6 use. And reduce it to a dead letter here would be just
- 7 contrary to this Court's precedence, and very harmful to
- 8 the medical community. This is very important to -- to
- 9 doctors around the country.
- Now, is this a natural process? The
- 11 question was raised. Of course it's a natural process.
- 12 These metabolites come from the liver. They don't come
- 13 from a test tube. They don't come from a syringe. It's
- 14 just like cholesterol. If I eat in a French restaurant,
- 15 there's some human intervention there that gives me high
- 16 cholesterol. And if I eat wild strawberries, there's no
- 17 human intervention. But either way, the doctors get to
- 18 look at my cholesterol and hypothesize ranges that they
- 19 think are essential. It's the very same phenomenon.
- 20 Entirely natural.
- 21 Now, this is a clean legal issue. Under
- 22 section 101, it's always been a legal issue. They say
- 23 section 102 and 103 are the most elusive questions in
- 24 the field of patent law. This is a Federal lawsuit
- 25 against a hospital; it's cost millions of dollars to

- 1 defend.
- 2 Two trips to this Court, two trips to the
- 3 Federal circuit. We're still litigating this treble
- 4 damages case. It should be terminated under this
- 5 Court's precedence, as the district court did giving
- 6 summary judgment.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I guess my problem is,
- 8 if we call this just simply a application of natural
- 9 phenomenon or of a natural process, why are treatment
- 10 patents at all --
- MR. SHAPIRO: Well, because --
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- permissible, meaning
- 13 if someone finds out that at level 300, it's bad, and
- 14 tells doctors to stop, that's natural, too.
- 15 MR. SHAPIRO: Yes. Well, I think that's
- 16 right. That's -- that is a second issue. But the first
- 17 issue is the breadth of the preemption, which precludes
- 18 anyone else in the country, from similarly as
- 19 Justice Scalia did -- those numbers are wrong. And
- 20 patients can't use those numbers safely or they won't
- 21 get cured of this disease.
- 22 For 20 years, the public is stuck with the
- 23 erroneous information. Now, counsel suggests that it's
- 24 narrow preemption because it doesn't cover
- 25 Host-versus-Graft or leukemia. Those are not autoimmune

- 1 diseases. Every autoimmune disease is swept in here.
- 2 And there are dozens and dozens of them. They have
- 3 different characteristics. You don't take a "one size
- 4 fits all approach to autoimmune disease. There are
- 5 different numbers for different diseases.
- 6 That's what Mayo is trying to do, to have
- 7 some personalized medicine for skin disorders. And they
- 8 said that -- that is an infringement and we're entitled
- 9 to treble damages and an injunction. Now, is this like
- 10 the Morse case? Yes, it is like the Morse case.
- 11 Prometheus is trying to preempt diseases it never
- 12 researched, and it's trying to preempt numbers that
- 13 differ from its numbers fundamentally.
- 14 They have the number 7000 in their patented
- 15 number. We thought the number should be 5700. This is
- 16 a very dangerous toxic drug. If you get the wrong
- 17 number set in concrete for 20 years, that is a huge
- 18 problem for patients. And there are millions and
- 19 millions of patients suffering from autoimmune disease.
- 20 So we urge the Court to protect the research
- 21 process here that's so fundamental to American health
- 22 and to the economy and the healthcare industry.
- We thank the Court.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 25 Counsel.

1	The case is submitted.	
2	(Whereupon, at 11:06 a.m., the case in the	
3	above-entitled matter was submitted.)	
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