

News Release

Your Contact

Friederike Segeberg +49 6151 72-4081

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Nigeria Receives Record Praziquantel Donation

- **Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany supplies around 34 million tablets this year to fight schistosomiasis in the west African country**

Geneva, Switzerland, May 24, 2016 – Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, announced today that the largest single delivery of praziquantel tablets in the history of our Praziquantel Donation Program recently arrived in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. The west African country has received around 34 million tablets for mass distribution to school children. With this, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany has donated more tablets to a single country than it did to the entire continent in 2012 (27 million). Today in Geneva, Nigeria's Minister of Health, Prof. Isaac Folorunso Adewole, expressed his country's thanks to Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany and the World Health Organization (WHO) for their joint efforts in the fight against the neglected tropical disease schistosomiasis. Stefan Oschmann, Chairman of the Executive Board and CEO of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, met the minister on the occasion of the 69th World Health Assembly (WHA), the decision-making body of WHO, in Geneva. The participants included Dr. Kesetebirhan Admasu, Minister of Health of Ethiopia, as well as WHO Assistant Director-General Dr. Ren Minghui.

“We want to eliminate the insidious worm disease and give children the opportunity to participate in the economic development of their home countries. Our donation of 34 million tablets to WHO for Nigeria – enough to treat 13.6 million school children – shows that we are on the right track. However, millions of children still suffer from schistosomiasis. And we know that we alone cannot solve the problem with our

Page 1 of 3



tablets,” said Oschmann. In Africa, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany is supporting educational and awareness programs, researching schistosomiasis therapies for very young children and cooperating with partners in the Global Schistosomiasis Alliance, among other things. “Furthermore, in the future we will collaborate even more closely with our partners to finally eliminate schistosomiasis,” Oschmann continued.

“With more than 235 million people infected, schistosomiasis is one of the most prevalent tropical diseases in Africa. The worm disease is widespread in all regions of Nigeria, above all among children. We are therefore grateful for every sustained initiative that supports us in fighting schistosomiasis,” said Adewole. Admasu added, “Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany’s commitment not only helps children who are ill – it also relieves the public healthcare systems of the affected countries.”

Minghui continued, “Medicine donations such as this are essential to the fight against neglected tropical diseases. If we are to meet the ambitious sustainable development goals, we need the strong engagement of the private sector, sectors outside health and all development partners.”

As part of its responsibility for society and within Health, one of its corporate responsibility strategic spheres of activity, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany is supporting WHO in the fight against the worm disease schistosomiasis in Africa. Praziquantel is well tolerated and the most effective treatment to date for schistosomiasis. Since 2007, it has been used to treat more than 74 million patients, primarily school children. To this end, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany has donated over 340 million tablets to WHO.

According to WHO, Nigeria is the world’s most endemic country for schistosomiasis. It is estimated that around 37% of the overall population (64.1 million people) requires treatment. Nigeria has been participating in the Praziquantel Donation Program since 2008. To date, through WHO Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany has donated nearly 105 million tablets to Nigeria, making it the main beneficiary country of the donation program. In total, nearly 20 million Nigerian patients have been treated to date, primarily school children.

Schistosomiasis

Schistosomiasis is a chronic condition and is one of the most common and most devastating parasitic diseases in tropical countries. It is estimated that 260 million people are infected worldwide and that around 200,000 die from it each year. Flatworms transmit the chronic disease. It is widespread in tropical and subtropical regions where large sections of the populations have no access to clean water and sanitary installations. People become infected with the disease by worm larvae mainly in freshwater, for example while working, swimming, fishing or washing their clothes. The miniscule larvae penetrate human skin, enter the blood vessels and attack internal organs. The infection rate is particularly high among school-aged children. Praziquantel is the only active ingredient with which all forms of schistosomiasis can be treated. WHO has therefore deemed praziquantel, the most cost-efficient solution for the health of patients in need, as the drug of choice.

The Praziquantel Donation Program

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany initiated the Praziquantel Donation Program in cooperation with WHO back in 2007. Since then, more than 340 million tablets have been donated and over 74 million patients treated, mainly school children. Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany has committed itself to maintaining its efforts in the fight against the tropical disease until schistosomiasis has been eliminated. To this end, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany is donating up to 250 million tablets per year to WHO. The planned annual donation has a value of around US\$ 23 million. In addition, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany is supporting an awareness program at schools in Africa in order to educate children about the causes of schistosomiasis and ways to prevent it. Furthermore, as part of a public-private partnership, the company is researching a new formulation of praziquantel that can also be administered to very young children. To date, the tablets are only suitable for children older than six. At the end of 2014, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany founded the Global Schistosomiasis Alliance together with partners such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and World Vision International.

Further information on the fight against schistosomiasis is available on the [Internet](#).

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Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is a leading science and technology company in healthcare, life science and performance materials. Around 50,000 employees work to further develop technologies that improve and enhance life – from biopharmaceutical therapies to treat cancer or multiple sclerosis, cutting-edge systems for scientific research and production, to liquid crystals for smartphones and LCD televisions. In 2015, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, generated sales of € 12.85 billion in 66 countries.

Founded in 1668, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is the world's oldest pharmaceutical and chemical company. The founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed corporate group. Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, holds the global rights to the Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, name and brand. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the company operates as EMD Serono, MilliporeSigma and EMD Performance Materials.