

News Release

Your Contact

Neetha Mahadevan +49 6151 72-6328

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Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany Furthers Commitment Towards Elimination of Schistosomiasis Through Public-Private Partnership

- **Public-private partnership in Australia and the US is part of the company's Global Health Institute portfolio**
- **Goal is to develop new diagnostics to identify all schistosomiasis patients in need of treatment to reach elimination agenda**
- **Company celebrates 10th partnership anniversary of the Praziquantel Donation Program with WHO**

Geneva, April 18, 2017 – Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, today announced it has formed a public-private partnership for the next three years with the [Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine](#) (James Cook University, Queensland) and [Baylor College of Medicine](#) (Texas, USA) to strengthen the current work on diagnostic development in schistosomiasis. This furthers the company's commitment to support the fight against the worm disease, the cornerstone of which effort is the Praziquantel Donation Program.

The donation program is a strong element of schistosomiasis elimination agenda but the company also recognizes the need to generate additional innovative tools and accelerate the path towards elimination of this neglected tropical disease. Therefore, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany has additionally recently committed to create a Global Health Institute with the goal to deliver integrated health solutions for vulnerable populations in the developing world suffering from infectious diseases, including schistosomiasis, malaria and bacterial infections. The public-private partnership is part of this initiative.

Page 1 of 4



“As we celebrate the 10th partnership anniversary of the Praziquantel Donation Program, more than 100 million patients, primarily school-aged children, have been treated to date. But we want to go beyond donations,” said Belén Garijo, member of the Executive Board of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany and CEO Healthcare. “The development of new diagnostics together with other health solutions such as new treatments or tools to control transmission through public-private partnerships will help create a turning point for the elimination of schistosomiasis and other NTDs.”

The company’s Global Health Institute’s current portfolio includes, among others, the development of a pediatric formulation of praziquantel via a consortium to treat children younger than 6 years old, the screening of the company’s compound library through a dedicated schistosomiasis drug discovery platform, and the development of innovative schistosomiasis diagnostics in association with the current efforts of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The partnership attracted support from Austrade, the Australian Government’s investment promotion agency, which provided funding to the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine (AITHM) under the Australian Tropical Medicine Commercialization Grants Program to support the three-way collaboration. Through the public-private partnership, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany intends to identify new schistosomiasis biomarkers in order to develop new diagnostics essential to determine all schistosomiasis patients in need of treatment to reach its elimination agenda. The company will co-invest 200,000 \$AUD per year for the duration of the partnership.

“The collaboration between AITHM, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany and Baylor College of Medicine on schistosomiasis is a leading example of Australian researchers working with international organizations to address issues of global health,” said Paul Field, Austrade’s Senior Investment Specialist. “We were delighted to award the grant to the AITHM team led by Prof. Alex Loukas and to facilitate this investment by the company into Australian research.”

To celebrate the 10th anniversary partnership of the Praziquantel Donation Program and to further raise awareness for schistosomiasis, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt,

Germany is supporting the #MakingSchistory campaign of the Global Schistosomiasis Alliance. The campaign acknowledges the great steps taken in moving towards elimination of schistosomiasis, while recognizing the need for stronger concerted efforts to keep fighting this dreadful infection until it is wiped out. More information is available at www.MakingSchistory.com.

About Schistosomiasis

Schistosomiasis is a chronic condition and one of the most common and most devastating parasitic diseases in tropical countries. It is estimated that more than 200 million people are infected worldwide and that around 280,000 die from it each year. Flatworms transmit the 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 parasite via contact with 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 500 million tablets have been donated and over 100 million patients treated, mainly school children. The company has committed itself to maintaining its efforts in the fight against the tropical disease until schistosomiasis has been eliminated. To this end, each year the company is donating up to 250 million tablets to WHO. The planned annual donation has a value of around US\$ 28 million. In addition, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is supporting awareness programs 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, the company founded the Global Schistosomiasis Alliance together with partners such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the U.S. development agency USAID, the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI) and World Vision International.

About Austrade

Austrade is the Australian Government's agency for the promotion of trade, investment, and education and for the development of tourism policy programs and research. Working in partnership with Australian state and territory governments, Austrade provides international investors with the information needed to establish or expand a business in Australia and to access Australian innovation and research and development capability.

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About Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany

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 2016, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, generated sales of € 15.0 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“ name and brand. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the company operates as EMD Serono, MilliporeSigma and EMD Performance Materials.