

Novartis Access Shares One-year Learnings and Announces Memorandum of Understanding with Rwanda

BASEL, Switzerland, November 29, 2016 /3BL Media/ – Novartis announced today that Rwanda is the third country to sign a memorandum of understanding with Novartis Access after Kenya and Ethiopia. This agreement contributes to the strategy of the Rwandan government to increase investment in prevention, diagnosis and treatment of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). First Novartis Access product deliveries are expected in early 2017.

The announcement was made during an event on Improving care for chronic patients in lower-income countries hosted by Novartis Access and the Novartis Foundation. The dialogue convened public health experts, government representatives, NGOs and academia. Together they explored ways to improve the continuum of care for patients suffering from chronic conditions in lower-income countries.

Novartis Access is a portfolio of 15 on- and off-patent medicines against key chronic diseases, which is offered to governments and public-sector customers at a price of USD 1 per treatment per month. Since the program's launch in September 2015, more than 100,000 monthly treatments have been delivered to Kenya, Ethiopia and Lebanon*. Capacity-building activities to screen and diagnose people for diabetes and hypertension have started in Kenya, and discussions are ongoing to introduce the program in more than 10 countries across three continents. Preparing the ground for future country roll-outs, 312 products have been submitted to health authorities for regulatory approval in 19 countries.

“Novartis is committed to bringing affordable drugs to people in lower-income countries – but affordability is just the tip of the iceberg,” said Joseph Jimenez, Chief Executive Officer of Novartis. “Addressing the underlying causes of poor health at the scale needed in these countries requires that governments and NGOs collaborate with companies to incorporate private-sector expertise and resources. This isn't just desirable, it's essential.”

Despite progress, the past 12 months have brought to the fore some challenges. In particular, experience on the ground shows that the portfolio approach requires a paradigm shift in how countries procure medicines. In addition, national essential medicines lists are not regularly updated, hindering countries from purchasing Novartis Access medicines. Further, healthcare systems in lower-income countries are often ill-equipped to deliver quality care as they are constrained by an under-investment in infrastructure, which leads to a lack of clinics and hospitals, shortage of medical staff, poor medicine distribution networks and low numbers of trained healthcare providers.

“Programs like Novartis Access can help change the way patients approach chronic diseases,” says Dr. Jonathan Kiliko, Head of Customer Services at Mission for Essential Drugs and Supplies (MEDS). “A virtuous circle of peer education starts when patients know that early diagnosis and treatment can help them live well for many years. They start to teach the rest of the community about the benefits of being screened and treated. This has already been seen in HIV/AIDS, and is likely to be replicated with NCDs.”

As an innovative social business, Novartis Access was recently recognized as best practice in the 2016 Access to Medicine Index. The Index measures the performance of the top-20 pharmaceutical companies to improve access to medicines and healthcare in developing countries. Novartis ranked third in the Index moving up from fourth place in 2014.

Managing NCDs is particularly challenging in lower-income countries as they are faced with the dual disease burden of infectious and chronic diseases.. Twenty-eight million people die every year from

cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, respiratory diseases and cancers in these countries, representing nearly 75% of deaths from NCDs globally¹.

About Novartis Access

Novartis Access is a Group-wide program to help fight chronic diseases in lower-income countries. The Novartis Access portfolio focuses on affordability and availability of 15 on- and off-patent Novartis medicines addressing key diseases areas – cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, respiratory illnesses, and breast cancer. The portfolio is offered as a basket to governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other public-sector customers at a price of USD 1 per treatment per month. Beyond the portfolio of medicines, Novartis Access offers capacity-building activities to support healthcare systems in preventing, diagnosing and treating NCDs. We are striving to roll out the program in 30 countries in the coming years – depending on governmental and stakeholder demand – aiming to reach 20 million patients per year by 2020.

Novartis Access is integrated in Novartis Social Business, a unit which includes the Novartis Malaria Initiative and the Novartis Healthy Family programs. This unit is operationally managed by Sandoz, the Novartis generics and biosimilars division.

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About Novartis

Novartis provides innovative healthcare solutions that address the evolving needs of patients and societies. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Novartis offers a diversified portfolio to best meet these needs: innovative medicines, eye care and cost-saving generic pharmaceuticals. Novartis is the only global company with leading positions in these areas. In 2015, the Group achieved net sales of USD 49.4 billion, while R&D throughout the Group amounted to approximately USD 8.9 billion (USD 8.7 billion excluding impairment and amortization charges). Novartis Group companies employ approximately 118,000 full-time-equivalent associates. Novartis products are available in more than 180 countries around the world. For more information, please visit <http://www.novartis.com>.

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*In Lebanon, Novartis Access medicines are distributed through the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Reference

[1] WHO, Noncommunicable diseases fact sheet, January 2015:
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs355/en/>

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