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PATH and MMV launch 5-year global initiative to support elimination of relapsing malaria

23 April 2019 | News

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PATH and Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) announce a 5-year, jointly-led initiative, VivAccess, to support countries in the elimination of Plasmodium vivax (P. vivax) malaria. The initiative is part of the larger global effort to support malaria-endemic countries in the adoption and use of new and existing tools, to facilitate well-tolerated and effective radical cure to prevent relapse. VivAccess's work is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

P. vivax is the most frequently occurring species of malaria parasite outside of sub-Saharan Africa, putting approximately 2.5 billion people at risk and causing around 7.5 million infections a year. Each infection can lead to multiple relapses due to the parasite's ability to lie dormant in the liver. To completely clear the body of parasites and achieve radical cure, two drugs are required: one for the blood stage infection causing malaria symptoms, and another for the liver-stage. The class of liver-stage drugs currently used to treat P. vivax malaria can cause hemolysisin individuals who have the common genetic disorder G6PD deficiency that affects approximately 400 million people globally. It is therefore important to test for G6PD deficiency in order to guide the appropriate use of liver-stage drugs.

The goal of VivAccess is to support introduction and increased access to the suite of radical cure products to address these challenges.

George Jagoe, Executive Vice President, Access & Product Management at MMV said, "Because one infection caused by the P. vivax parasite has the uncanny ability to cause a patient to relapse in the absence of a new infective mosquito bite, it amplifies the burden of malaria, placing a huge burden on the individuals, communities and countries it infects. New tools to stop this cycle of disease have been developed, and more are in development. VivAccess is set to accelerate their access to those in need and in doing so protect patients from relapses and support countries to move towards malaria elimination."

Dr. Larry Slutsker, Director of the PATH Center for Malaria Control and Elimination said, "Relapsing malaria due to Plasmodium vivax is the most geographically widespread malaria, with well over 2 billion people living in areas of risk for infection. Vivax malaria causes massive suffering in terms of illness, anemia, and death. The new tools that we can now bring to bear through the VivAccess partnership present a unique opportunity to make progress against this major public health challenge and underscore the importance of continued investment in malaria research and development."

Through VivAccess, the partnership will continue to work closely with the World Health Organization, National Malaria Control Programs, and country-based healthcare partners to support the introduction and use of these effective tools, which include malaria diagnostics, G6PD diagnostics, blood-stage drugs, and liver-stage radical-cure drugs. Guided by the leadership of national health agencies, VivAccess will provide support in terms of market analytics, technical expertise, and product delivery coordination as countries seek to introduce effective radical cure into national malaria protocols and accelerate progress towards their malaria elimination goals. In the process, the initiative will strengthen national and local capacities in alignment with the WHO malaria strategic agenda.