

Chagas disease, also known as American trypanosomiasis, is a potentially life-threatening illness caused by the protozoan parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi*¹.

The disease affects approximately 6 million people¹, mainly in Latin America. Less than 1% of affected individuals receive proper treatment², and current available drugs have high rates of adverse effects and do not meet the need for the entire spectrum of the disease. Chagas disease begins with a bite by the triatomine bug, also known as the “kissing bug” because it usually bites people’s faces when they sleep. Often people are infected without even noticing it.

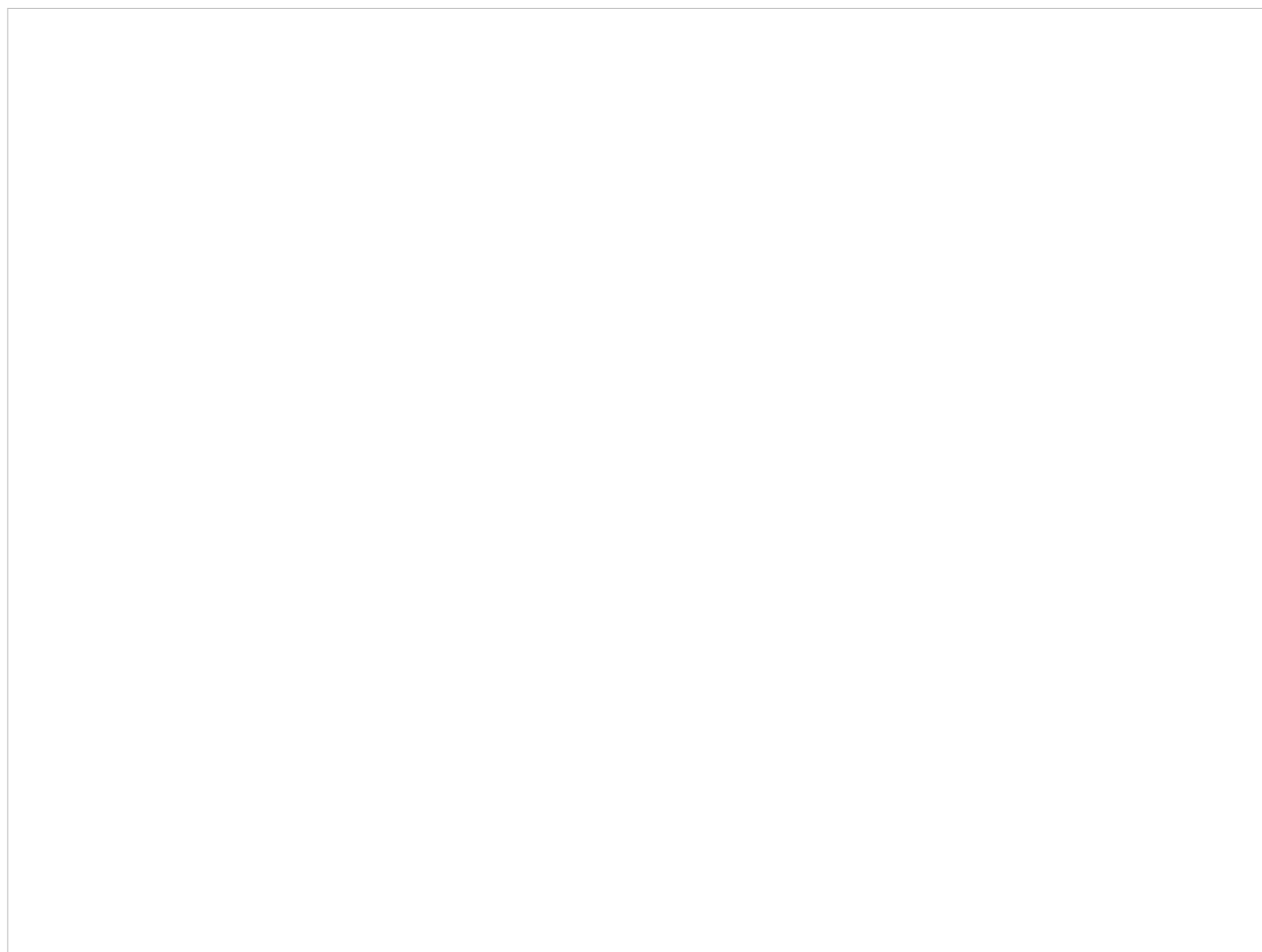


The disease sits at the crossroads between two worlds: it starts as a tropical parasitic disease but can end as a chronic disease. This is why preventing, treating and managing Chagas disease requires an integrated, end-to-end approach that covers both the acute and chronic phases.

Improving health outcomes for Chagas patients also requires being active on three fronts: novel drug discovery, clinical research, and healthcare system strengthening.

The Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases (NITD) and its academic partners have been conducting research into novel growth inhibitors for the treatment of Chagas disease and other kinetoplastid diseases. These efforts have identified a unique drug target for trypanosomatid parasitic protozoa and a new chemical tool for investigating the function of cell division. The parasites that cause Chagas disease, leishmaniasis and African sleeping sickness share a common cell cycle protein, which may be a promising new target for treatment. The study was published in Nature Microbiology in October 2020. In 2020, NITD was awarded a three-year grant from the Wellcome Trust for drug discovery science in cryptosporidiosis and Chagas disease to pursue

potential first-in-class treatments.



During the chronic phase, when the disease evolves, it can affect key organs as the heart, leading to cardiac disorders in up to 30% of patients and up to 10% may develop neurological and/or gastrointestinal disorders. Chagas cardiomyopathy accounts for the majority of death and disability among individuals affected by the disease. Against this background, in 2019 Novartis launched the first clinical study in people with heart failure due to chronic Chagas cardiomyopathy to assess an innovative therapy in this underserved patient population. The trial also includes sub-studies that may help better understand the underlying pathophysiology of Chagas cardiomyopathy (biomarkers, arrhythmia burden, and use of magnetic resonance imaging to evaluate cardiac structure, function and fibrosis).

Further, we are working with health authorities and stakeholders in Latin America on healthcare system strengthening initiatives to improve health outcomes and access to innovation to ensure no patient is left behind. For example, we signed a collaboration agreement with the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (IS Global) to enhance awareness of Chagas disease and improve the wellbeing of Chagas disease patients in Bolivia. We are also collaborating with the Global Chagas Disease Coalition to develop an online medical platform for Chagas disease, which aims to build capability among healthcare professionals to adopt an integrated disease management approach.

We supported the World Heart Federation and the Inter-American Society of Cardiology in developing an end-to-end roadmap for Chagas disease, published in March 2020. It explores the patient journey from diagnosis to treatment, and provides actionable recommendations for policymakers and healthcare professionals.

In 2019, Novartis joined the Global Chagas Disease Coalition, an alliance to increase disease awareness and foster synergies in controlling the disease and promoting access to diagnosis and treatment.

[Read the press release](#)

[Download Chagas Disease factsheet](#)

[Read the photo story Chagas Disease: Bringing Chagas disease to people's attention](#)

[Read the photo story Chagas Disease: Breaking the silence](#)

World Chagas Disease Day 2021

Together with partners, Novartis is committed to reimagining the fight against Chagas disease and advocating for an integrated, end-to-end care approach.

[Learn More](#)

World Heart Day 2020: From our heart to yours

For the past six decades, Novartis has been working to advance heart health around the world.

[Learn More](#)

References:

1. World Health Organization: [https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/chagas-disease-\(american-trypanosomiasis\)](https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/chagas-disease-(american-trypanosomiasis))
2. Barcelona Institute for Global Health: <https://www.isglobal.org/en/enfermedad-de-chagas>

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