Leprosy

The fight against leprosy is one of the greatest public health successes in history. Yet, still today, 2 to 3 million people are living with physical disability and stigma as a result of the disease. Further, for the past ten years, around 200 000 new cases have been reported each year.

For more than 30 years, Novartis and the Novartis Foundation have been working with partners around the world to eliminate leprosy. Multidrug therapy (MDT) has been a major breakthrough in the treatment of leprosy and its free availability has reduced the global disease burden by 95% in the past three decades. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Novartis MDT donations have helped to treat more than 7.3 million patients since 2000. Further, they have made it possible to interrupt the transmission of leprosy and prevent disabilities.

Going the last mile to eliminate leprosy

Since 2000, Novartis has been donating MDT through the WHO. In 2021, we renewed our pledge to extend our donation with the WHO through a new five-year agreement.

In 2019, the Novartis Foundation announced a strategic alliance with Microsoft and the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation to explore the development of an AI-enabled accelerator of leprosy screening/diagnosis that analyzes images of skin lesions.

Interrupting transmission is key to disease elimination

Launched in 2014, the Leprosy Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (LPEP) program has tested the real-world effectiveness of providing preventative treatment to close contacts of newly diagnosed leprosy patients. The
evidence generated by LPEP in the seven countries where the program is operational led to the inclusion of this strategy in the WHO Guidelines for the Diagnosis, Treatment and Prevention of Leprosy in 2018. Results from the program, which covered more than 150,000 people across seven countries, showed that large-scale implementation of this strategy could accelerate leprosy elimination.

Partnering to eliminate leprosy

- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Global Partnership for Zero Leprozy (GPZL)
- International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP)
- American Leprosy Missions
- FAIRMED
- German Leprosy and TB Relief Association
- NLR – until No Leprosy Remains

Novartis Global Health

Novartis Global Health aims to transform health in lower income populations through applying expertise, people and full organizational capability to address major, unresolved global health challenges. Leprosy is part of the Novartis Global Health Unit as a Flagship program. For more than 30 years, Novartis and the Novartis Foundation have been working with partners around the world on innovative approaches to leprosy elimination. According to the World Health Organization, Novartis Multidrug therapy donations have helped to treat more than 7.3 million leprosy patients since 2000.

References:


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