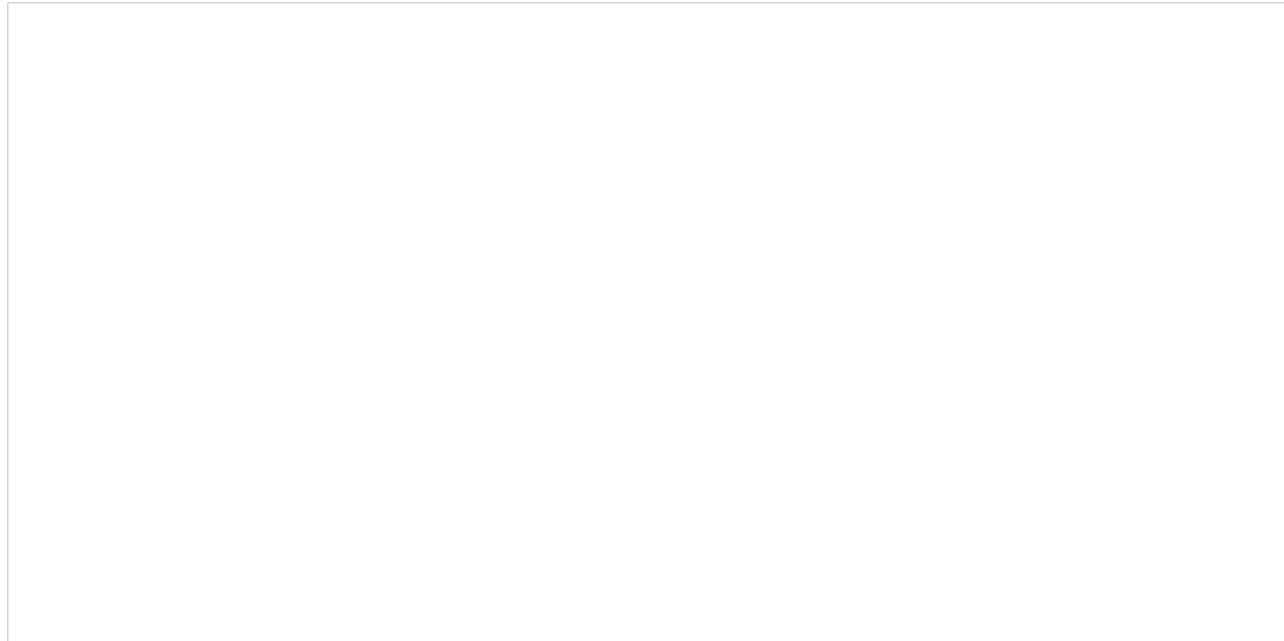


The fight against leprosy is one of the greatest public health successes in history. Yet, still today, 2 to 3 million people are living with physical disability and stigma as a result of the disease. Further, for the past ten years, around 200 000 new cases have been reported each year.



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.

Going the last mile to eliminate leprosy

Since 2000, Novartis has been donating multidrug therapy through the WHO. In 2020, we renewed our pledge to extend our donation with the WHO through 2025. Overall, MDT has made it possible to treat patients, interrupt the transmission of leprosy, and prevent disabilities.

In 2019, the Novartis Foundation announced a strategic alliance with Microsoft and the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation to develop an AI-enabled accelerator of leprosy diagnosis that can analyze images of skin lesions.

In 2020, Microsoft selected the Novartis Foundation as one of the initial four partners of their new AI for Health initiative, a five-year program to scale up global health initiatives with the power of AI.

Interrupting transmission is key to disease elimination

Launched in 2014, the Leprosy Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (LPEP)¹ 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, show that large-scale implementation of this strategy could accelerate leprosy elimination by decades.

[Read More](#)

Partnering to eliminate leprosy

- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)
- [Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy \(GPZL\)](#)
- [International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations \(ILEP\)](#)
- [American Leprosy Missions](#)
- [FAIRMED](#)
- [the 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 million leprosy patients since 2000.

[Learn More](#)

References:

1. Richardus JH et al. Leprosy post-exposure prophylaxis with single-dose rifampicin (LPEP): an international feasibility programme. *Lancet Global Health*, published online on 29 October 2020. Available at: [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(20\)30396-X/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30396-X/fulltext)

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- <https://www.novartisfoundation.org/news/novartis-foundation-and-microsoft-partner-develop-ai-enabled-digital-health-tool-early-leprosy-detection>
- <https://news.microsoft.com/en-ca/2020/01/29/microsoft-launches-new-ai-for-good-program-ai-for-health-to-accelerate-global-health-initiatives>
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- <https://www.novartis.com/media-library/leprosy>
- https://www.who.int/health-topics/leprosy#tab=tab_1
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