Going the final mile against leprosy

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Over the past 30 years more than 16 million leprosy patients have been treated for the disease. As the spread of this disease has declined, so has the level of international attention and political commitment, including knowledge about diagnosis and treatment in many countries. As a result, progress against the disease has slowed and the number of new leprosy patients reported each year has remained constant at about 230,000.
Early detection and prompt treatment of leprosy decreases the risk of disability developing, a key step toward eliminating the disease altogether.

Going the last mile and eliminating the disease altogether remains a key challenge. Since 2000, Novartis has worked closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) to donate multidrug therapy (MDT) to leprosy patients globally, helping to treat over 5 million patients.

Now the Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development, which for 25 years has played a major role in fighting leprosy, is taking steps to bring the world closer to the eventual goal of leprosy elimination.

In 2013 the foundation launched a new strategy, based on a consensus reached by a group of leading experts that was published in the Lancet Infectious Diseases [2]. It focuses on interrupting leprosy transmission and is being implemented in pilot sites across Asia, Africa and Latin America, with Netherlands Leprosy Relief and other partners.

Read more [3]

The Novartis Foundation also supports a project in Cambodia, where new leprosy patients continue to be detected each year. Here, the Novartis Foundation is working with the Cambodian government and the CIOMAL Foundation to implement contact tracing by tracking down people who have had contact with former leprosy patients and examining them for signs of the disease.

The Novartis Foundation’s work in Cambodia was featured in an edition of ‘The Cure’, a healthcare program on Al Jazeera.

Watch the program (for non-USA only) [4]

Resources:

Watch videos about the Novartis Foundation’s work in Cambodia [5]

Learn about the Novartis Foundation’s leprosy control project LPEP [6]

Learn about Novartis Foundation’s new strategy for eliminating leprosy [7]

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