

# Novartis supports DOH goal of malaria-free PH by 2030

Nov 20, 2021

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- *In May 2021, Novartis reached a major milestone in the fight against malaria with the delivery of one billion courses of anti-malaria treatment since 1999, more than 90% of which was supplied without profit to malaria-endemic countries around the globe, including the Philippines.*

**November 20, 2021** – In line with the country's observance of Malaria Awareness Month this November, Novartis declared its support for the Department of Health's target of zero malaria cases in the country by 2030.

"Novartis is privileged to be a longstanding partner of the DOH National Malaria Control and Elimination Program [NMCEP]. We are fully committed to continue working with the DOH and other stakeholders in achieving our shared goal of a malaria-free Philippines by the year 2030," said Mr. Jugo Tsumura, President and Managing Director, Novartis Healthcare Philippines, Inc.

The Philippines has significantly reduced the incidence of malaria by 87% from 48,569 in 2003 to 6,120 cases in 2020, according to the DOH. The country has also reported a 98% reduction in the number of mortality due to malaria, from 162 deaths in 2003 to 3 deaths in 2020.<sup>1</sup>

Along with the remarkable reduction in malaria incidence is the shrinking geographic extent of the mosquito-borne disease. The DOH has officially declared 60 provinces as malaria-free; an additional 19 provinces have reached malaria elimination phase with zero local transmission, and are awaiting to be assessed and declared malaria-free provinces. At the end of 2020, only 126 barangays from 2 provinces in the country have recorded local malaria transmission.<sup>1</sup>

Novartis has been committed to the fight against malaria for more than two decades. In 1999, the company launched the first fixed-dose Artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT).<sup>2</sup> ACT is considered by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the best available malaria treatment, particularly for *P. falciparum* malaria, the most deadly form of the disease, responsible for over 99% of cases in Africa and half of cases in Asia.<sup>3</sup>

In May 2021, Novartis reached a major milestone in the fight against malaria with the delivery of one billion courses of ACT since 1999, more than 90% of which was supplied without profit to malaria-endemic countries around the globe, including the Philippines.<sup>2</sup> Since the turn of the century, ACTs have transformed malaria treatment and contributed to the dramatic reduction in malaria deaths. Adoption of ACTs as first-line treatment by the WHO has been critical to the global malaria response.<sup>2</sup> Since 2000, the WHO estimates that 1.5 billion malaria cases have been averted and 7.6 million lives saved.<sup>4</sup> Along with malaria prevention tools and better diagnostics, ACTs remain a key component of the global drive to reach malaria elimination.

In 2001, two years after the launch of its ACT, Novartis signed an agreement with the WHO, committing to make the antimalarial available without profit to the public sector of malaria-endemic countries. Although the agreement expired in 2011, Novartis continues to provide treatments on the same terms as before.<sup>2</sup>

Children bear a significant burden of malaria disease and death. In 2009, Novartis launched the first dispersible pediatric ACT developed in partnership with Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV). More than 450 million courses of the child-friendly ACT formulation have been delivered in more than 70 countries, contributing to a significant reduction in malaria death.<sup>5</sup>

Novartis continues to spearhead the use of ACTs to treat malaria. The company is now testing a new ACT formulation for infants weighing less than five kilograms in collaboration with the PAMAfrica research consortium led by MMV. This is one of the most vulnerable groups affected by malaria, for whom there is currently no approved treatment.<sup>5</sup>

Over the last few years, worrying signs have been observed of emerging drug resistance to ACTs in South East Asia, and more recently in Africa. If widespread resistance to ACTs occurs, particularly in Africa, new effective treatments will be urgently needed. In 2018, Novartis committed to invest more than USD 100 million over five years to further advance research and development of next-generation treatments.<sup>5</sup>

## About Novartis

Novartis is reimagining medicine to improve and extend people's lives. As a leading global medicines company, we use innovative

science and digital technologies to create transformative treatments in areas of great medical need. In our quest to find new medicines, we consistently rank among the world's top companies investing in research and development. Novartis products reach more than 750 million people globally and we are finding innovative ways to expand access to our latest treatments. About 105 000 people of more than 140 nationalities work at Novartis around the world. Find out more at [www.novartis.com](http://www.novartis.com).

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### References:

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