

Pharma Refuses to Ensure Access to Lifesaving Hepatitis C Treatment at Global Meeting

Bangkok, Thailand, February 28, 2014

AIDS activists, including people living with HIV, people living with HCV, people who inject drugs (PWID), and their allies, are fighting for access to a new generation of HCV drugs—called direct-acting antivirals (DAAs). These drugs offer the potential to eradicate HCV; they have cured up to 100 percent of people in clinical trials.

All of the companies refused to commit to price reductions that would allow affordable access for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), home to more than 85 percent of the 185 million people living with HCV. Even Roche and Merck, producers of older, soon-to-be-obsolete HCV drugs, refused to lower prices to affordable levels.

In high-income countries, DAA treatment costs US\$140,000, although DAAs are cheap to produce. According to an analysis by academic experts, it costs less than US\$250 for a 12-week DAA regimen. [1] *“This level of greed is inexcusable, and keeps the cure out of reach for almost everyone who needs these drugs,”* says Shiba Phurailatpam, regional coordinator of the Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (APN+).

“Most people cannot afford HCV treatment—nor can their governments,” explains Paata Sabelashvili of the Georgian Harm Reduction Network. *“My government, like others in the Eastern European region, is launching a national treatment program, but astronomically high prices will limit it. How can governments and donors effectively address HCV if Pharma refuses to drop drug prices?”*

The strategies currently employed by these pharmaceutical companies, that include delayed drug registration, voluntary licensing, and patient assistance programs, are less likely to facilitate better access in LMICs. *“Governments should use every means available to them, including compulsory licenses, to protect public health and expand access to DAAs, even where they are patented,”* said Lorena Di Giano, general coordinator of the Red Latinoamericana por el Acceso a Medicamentos (RedLAM).

We are deeply committed to strategies that allow generic production of DAAs. Access to affordable generic drugs brought down HIV drug prices from US\$10,000 to under US\$100, saving millions of lives. People living with HCV deserve access to treatment; they should not become hostages to Pharma greed.

1st HCV World CAB Participant List

East and Southeast Asia

Jirasak Sripramong, Thai AIDS Treatment Action Group (TTAG), Thailand

Dr. Kieu Thi Mai Huong, SCDI, Vietnam

Dr. Lisa Peiching Huang, Médecins du Monde, Vietnam

Edo Agustian, PKNI, Indonesia

Aditya Wardhana, IAC, Indonesia

Do Dang Dong, VNP+, Vietnam

Zhang Bo, Yunnan IDA, China

Thomas Cai, AIDS Care China

Odilon Couzin, Hong Kong

Shiba Phurailatpam, Thailand

Giten Khwairakpam, Thailand

Kajal Bhardwaj, India

Paul Cawthorne, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Thailand

Dr. Gonzague Jourdain, Thailand

Eastern Europe/Central Asia

Paata Sabelashvili, Georgian Harm Reduction Network, Georgia

Sergey Golovin, ITPC-Russia

Ludmila Maistat, The HIV/AIDS Alliance-Ukraine

U.S./Europe

Karyn Kaplan, Treatment Action Group, United States

Tracy Swan, Treatment Action Group, United States

Khalil Elouardighi, Coalition Plus, France

Noah Metheny, Global Forum on MSM & HIV, United States

Camila Picchio, Treatment Action Group, United States

Simon Collins, HIV i-Base, United Kingdom

Chloé Forette, Médecins du Monde, France

Pauline Londeix, Act Up-Basel/ITPC, France

Jude Byrne, International Network of People Who Use Drugs (INPUD), United Kingdom

Jorrit Kabel, AIDS Fonds, The Netherlands

Els Torreele, Open Society Foundations, United States

Azzi Momenghalibaf, Open Society Foundations, United States

Tahir Amin, I-MAK, United States

Priti Radhakrishnan, I-MAK, United States

Africa Abshiro Halake, Kenya Red Cross Society

Ed Ngoksin, Global Network of PLWHA (GNP+), South Africa

Middle East/North Africa

Heba Wanis, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights

Dr. Mustapha Sodqi, ALCS (Association de Lutte Contre le Sida), Morocco

Othman Mellouk, ITPC-MENA, Morocco

Islands

Nudhar Bundhoo, Prévention Information et Lutte contre le Sida (PILS), Mauritius

Latin America

Lorena Di Giano, Red Latinoamericana por el Acceso a Medicamentos – RedLAM, Argentina