

MCT-2007-PA-003-BK

The Merck MECTIZAN® Donation Program - River Blindness

Program Name:



Summary:

The Merck MECTIZAN® Donation Program (MDP) provides MECTIZAN – free of charge and in perpetuity – for the treatment of river blindness (onchocerciasis) in endemic countries worldwide. The MDP is a partnership between public, private and non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs). The MDP is Merck’s largest global donation initiative reaching more than 60 million people a year in Africa, Latin America and Yemen.

Merck’s commitment is to donate MECTIZAN for river blindness wherever it is needed for as long as it is needed.

Overview:

The MDP is the largest on-going medical donation program in history. Since 1987, the MDP has approved more than 530 million treatments of MECTIZAN (ivermectin) for river blindness, a tropical disease.

The program is an unparalleled success story in terms of the number of people who have benefited and the level of cooperation demonstrated by Merck, UN agencies, NGDOs, governments and communities of endemic countries.

To millions of people, MECTIZAN helps limit the agonizing and disfiguring skin infections and eye lesions that dramatically affect the quality and duration of life. With only one annual dose, MECTIZAN is well suited for distribution in remote areas. It is also the only well-tolerated drug known to halt the development of river blindness. With the continued use of MECTIZAN, it is hoped that transmission of river blindness will be interrupted and the disease will be virtually eliminated.

In 1998, Merck expanded the MDP to include the prevention of lymphatic filariasis (LF) in African countries where onchocerciasis and lymphatic filariasis co-exist (see the Merck MECTIZAN Donation Program Fact Sheet on LF for detailed information).

Start Date:

October 21, 1987

Geographic Focus:	Mass treatment programs exist in 33 endemic countries in Africa, Latin America and Yemen in the Middle East.
Population Served:	More than 68 million treatments approved annually (2006) Estimates are that 37 million are infected with, and up to 100 million people are at risk of contracting, river blindness.
Program Partners:	WHO, World Bank, National Health Ministries, Non-governmental development organizations (e.g. The Carter Center, Helen Keller Worldwide, Sight Savers International, Christoffel-Blindenmission, etc.), Foundations, UNICEF, UNDP, and local communities.
Administration/Structure:	The MECTIZAN Expert Committee (MEC), an independent group of experts in tropical medicine and public health, reviews and approves new applications and facilitates treatment programs. The MECTIZAN Donation Program Secretariat at the Task Force for Child Survival & Development, reviews and approves continuation programs, monitors treatment programs, offers technical assistance to partners and serves as the administrative body of the MEC. Merck, through its Office of Contributions, receives approved applications from the MEC / MECTIZAN Donation Program Secretariat and oversees all logistical, shipping and customs issues related to MECTIZAN delivery.
Requirements/Eligibility:	Formal application for MECTIZAN is submitted to, and approved by, the MEC / MECTIZAN Donation Program Secretariat. Applying organizations and Ministries must demonstrate the ability to distribute MECTIZAN safely and effectively to endemic areas for at least five years, with appropriate systems established for storage and handling of drugs, surveillance, management and reporting of adverse drug reactions, record-keeping and reporting of treatments administered on an annual basis.
Program Cycle/Timing:	Application reviews occur on an ongoing basis.
Contact Information:	Ken Gustavsen Manager, Global Product Donations Merck & Co., Inc. One Merck Drive P.O. Box 100, WS1A-17 Whitehouse Station, NJ (USA) 08889-0100 Tel.: 908-423-3088 / Fax: 908-423-1987 E-mail: ken_gustavsen@merck.com MECTIZAN Donation Program Secretariat 750 Commerce Drive, Suite 400 Decatur, GA 30030 Tel.: 404-371-1460 / Fax: 404-371-1138 E-mail: MECTIZAN@taskforce.org