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Merck Commemorates 30 Years of MECTIZAN® Donation Program Progress

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Dateline City:

KENILWORTH, N.J.

Program Expanded to Reach Additional 100 Million People Annually for Lymphatic Filariasis in Support of New, Evidence-Based WHO Guidelines

KENILWORTH, N.J.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Merck (NYSE:MRK), known as MSD outside the United States and Canada, today announced an expansion of the MECTIZAN® Donation Program (MDP) to reach up to an additional 100 million people per year through 2025 as part of the global effort to eliminate lymphatic filariasis (LF).

Through the MDP, established by Merck in 1987, Merck donates MECTIZAN® (ivermectin) for onchocerciasis (river blindness) in all affected areas (Latin America, Africa, Yemen) and for LF in African countries where it co-exists with river blindness.

LF, also known as elephantiasis, is a parasitic disease transmitted to humans through the bites of mosquitoes. Over time, infection can impair the lymphatic system leading to severe swelling of the limbs and genitals resulting in severe disability and social stigma. One of the neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), it is present in 72 countries worldwide.

Recent studies funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and supported by Merck showed that adding ivermectin to the treatment regimen used in LF endemic countries where there is no river blindness can accelerate the time needed to achieve elimination of LF. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently published [new guidelines](#) outlining this approach, prompting Merck's decision to expand the geographic reach of the MDP to include areas outside of Africa. Merck and the MDP will work with the WHO, national LF programs and other stakeholders to develop a mechanism to enable national programs and their partners to deploy the additional donation.

"LF is on the short list of diseases that are targeted for elimination in the [World Health Organization's Roadmap on Neglected Tropical Diseases](#)," said Kenneth C. Frazier, chairman and chief executive officer, Merck. "With the evidence put forward in the WHO's new guidelines, we're expanding the MECTIZAN® Donation Program to bring improved health and hope to millions of people as we work toward the day when LF is no longer a threat."

Through the MDP and its partners, including endemic countries, NGOs, the WHO, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department for International Development (DFID) and other donors and implementation organizations, more than 250 million people in 32 countries are reached each year for river blindness and LF. Since the inception of the program in 1987, Merck has donated more than 2.8 billion treatments for both diseases.

About the MECTIZAN® Donation Program

The MECTIZAN® Donation Program (MDP) was established at the Task Force for Global Health in 1987 to provide medical, technical and administrative oversight of the donation of MECTIZAN® by Merck for the treatment of onchocerciasis. In 1998, the MDP expanded its mandate to include oversight of the donation of albendazole by GSK to be distributed in conjunction with MECTIZAN® for the elimination of lymphatic filariasis in onchocerciasis co-endemic areas.

About Merck

For more than a century, Merck, a leading global biopharmaceutical company known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada, has been inventing for life, bringing forward medicines and vaccines for many of the world's most challenging diseases. Through our prescription medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies and animal health products, we work with customers and operate in more than 140 countries to deliver innovative health solutions. We also demonstrate our commitment to increasing access to health care through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. Today, Merck continues to be at the forefront of research to advance the prevention and treatment of diseases that threaten people and communities around the world - including cancer, cardio-metabolic diseases, emerging animal diseases, Alzheimer's disease and infectious diseases including HIV and Ebola. For more information, visit www.merck.com and connect with us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Forward-Looking Statement of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, N.J., U.S.A.

This news release of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, N.J., U.S.A. (the “company”) includes “forward-looking statements” within the meaning of the safe harbor provisions of the U.S. Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These statements are based upon the current beliefs and expectations of the company’s management and are subject to significant risks and uncertainties. If underlying assumptions prove inaccurate or risks or uncertainties materialize, actual results may differ materially from those set forth in the forward-looking statements.

Risks and uncertainties include but are not limited to, general industry conditions and competition; general economic factors, including interest rate and currency exchange rate fluctuations; the impact of pharmaceutical industry regulation and health care legislation in the United States and internationally; global trends toward health care cost containment; technological advances, new products and patents attained by competitors; challenges inherent in new product development, including obtaining regulatory approval; the company’s ability to accurately predict future market conditions; manufacturing difficulties or delays; financial instability of international economies and sovereign risk; dependence on the effectiveness of the company’s patents and other protections for innovative products; and the exposure to litigation, including patent litigation, and/or regulatory actions.

The company undertakes no obligation to publicly update any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Additional factors that could cause results to differ materially from those described in the forward-looking statements can be found in the company’s 2016 Annual Report on Form 10-K and the company’s other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) available at the SEC’s Internet site (www.sec.gov).

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