CREATIVE APPROACHES TO IMPROVING ACCESS TO MEDICINES GLOBALLY

IDEAS FROM THE HEPATITIS C EXPERIENCE

PROGRAMME - 3 DECEMBER 2019

INTRODUCTION

Access to medical products is a complex global challenge at the interface between health, economics, politics and development. This symposium focuses on a sub-set of the broader access challenges, using Hepatitis C virus (HCV) as an extended case study to facilitate concrete discussions and novel thinking.

The purpose of the event is to spur fresh thinking on how to achieve innovation and global access to medicines, following up on the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IPI) Stakeholder Discussions in February 2018 in Bern. The case study approach is intended to advance the debate beyond generalities by focusing on a suite of specific strategies in relation to one class of health technologies, which may be an illustrative example of many new medicines to come.

THE CASE STUDY: MEDICINES FOR HEPATITIS C

Why HCV? In December 2013, the US Food and Drug Administration approved Gilead's sofosbuvir as the first direct-acting antiviral (DAA) that could cure HCV infection in 12 weeks, transforming the standard of care for a virus that has infected over 71 million people worldwide. However, initially priced at $84,000 per treatment course in the US, the drug also sparked an unprecedented degree of concern about the affordability of medicines across high-, middle- and low-income countries.

While the system of protection of intellectual property rights was central to the development of innovative, new and better drugs, governments and other health insurers wrestled with the question of how access to these highly-effective but costly medicines could be provided, and to whom. In the five years since, a whirlwind of events has transformed the landscape: a handful of other DAAs have entered the market offering clinical, health-system and economic benefits. National treatment programs have scaled-up dramatically – or stagnated. Different avenues for making the medicines available, of assured quality, and affordable have been tested, including voluntary and compulsory licensing, price negotiation, and the "Netflix" model. The development of a non-profit low-price competitor DAA has advanced significantly. HCV has spurred novel, creative strategies to improve both innovation and access to treatment, many of which are little-known outside specialist circles.

The moment is ripe to examine more closely efforts to strengthen both innovation and access to HCV medicines, and to reflect on the implications for broader, long-running debates on access to medicines and the challenge of achieving universal health coverage.

ORGANISED BY

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AGENDA

10:00 Introduction

Welcoming Remarks: Vinh-Kim Nguyen, Co-Director, Global Health Centre; Professor of Anthropology and Sociology, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies

Why are we engaging in this debate? Why do we think this discussion is needed? Prof. Felix Addor, Deputy Director General, Federal Institute of Intellectual Property

10:30 Session 1: Expanding National Treatment Programs

What role have different actors played in expanding access to treatment? In the absence of a major international funder of treatment, such as the role the Global Fund plays in HIV, what strategies have been successful in scaling-up treatment at country level? What global actions have been critical for supporting national efforts to expand treatment? What happens if governments fail to ensure access to important medicines for their population?

Speakers

- Philip Bruggmann, Chair Swiss Hepatitis, PD Dr. med., University of Zurich: Switzerland's national Hepatitis C strategy
- Heba Wanis, Researcher, Third World Network: Egypt's domestic approach: how combined efforts of the government, civil society and private sector secured access
- Gregory Dore, Professor, Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales, Sydney: Australia's universal access strategy: lump-sum remuneration and reaching marginalized populations
- Datuk Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah, Director General of Health, Ministry of Health, Malaysia: Malaysia's approach – alternate R&D approaches and compulsory licensing

Moderator: Martina Schwab, Co-head, Global Health Section, International Affairs Division, Swiss Federal Office of Public Health

Discussion with participants

12:00 Lunch Break

13:00 Session 2: Evolving Innovation Models and Implications for Access

What drives current approaches to innovation and how are innovation models changing? What has been the experience in HCV, and what have been the impacts?

Speakers

- Victor Roy, Research Fellow, UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose: Breakthroughs in public research that laid the groundwork for direct-acting antivirals
- Rekha Ramesh, Head of Global Public Policy, Gilead Sciences: Industry's breakthrough experience and access models for an innovative cure for hepatitis C
- Ari-Pekka Laitsaari, Senior Investment Officer, European Investment Bank: IP and acquisitions of small/medium pharmaceutical companies: The investors' perspective
- Bernard Pecoul, Executive Director, Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative: The Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative's HCV program

Moderator: Lucas von Wattenwyl, Senior Advisor, Federal Institute of Intellectual Property

14:30-14:45 Coffee Break

14:45 Session 3: Implications for Global Health Actors: What Do we learn from HCV for Broader Health Challenges?

What is transferable from the HepC experience to other diseases/therapeutic areas? What is not? What are the most relevant lessons, the most interesting ideas? How can we move from knowledge in public health to sustainable action within complex political environments?

Speakers

- Nora Kronig Romero, Vice-Director General, Ambassador for Global Health, Federal Office of Public Health, Switzerland: Implications for governments in the global context
- Thomas Cueni, Director General of International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers IFPMA: Implications for the research-based pharmaceutical industry
- Sherine Helmy, CEO, Pharco Pharmaceuticals: Implications for the generic industry
- Fifa Rahman, Board Member, NGO Delegation, UNITAID: Implications for civil society and global health funders
- Mariangela Simao, Assistant Director General, WHO: Implications for the WHO

Moderator: Suerie Moon, Co-Director of the Global Health Centre, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies

16:30 Synthesis of Major Themes and Closing Remarks

- **Presentation of a Cartoon:** Caro van Leeuwen
- **Synthesis of Themes:** Suerie Moon, Co-Director of the Global Health Centre
- **Closing Remarks:** Felix Addor, Deputy Director General, Federal Institute of Intellectual Property

17:00-18:00 Reception

This event will be livestreamed!

Venue

Maison de la paix
Auditorium Ivan Pictet
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2A
CH-1202 Geneva

More information and registration
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