

Global Partners Announce Donation of 500 Millionth Dose of Azithromycin, Marking Exceptional Progress to Help Alleviate the Suffering from Trachoma

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Trachoma is the Leading Infectious Cause of Blindness More Than 100 Government, Non-Governmental and Private Sector Partners Driving Progress Continued Efforts Needed to Reach 2020 Global Elimination Goal

Our collective efforts are helping to reduce the impacts of this ancient, preventable disease on affected individuals, families and communities.

The [International Trachoma Initiative \(ITI\)](#), [Pfizer Inc.](#) and [International Coalition for Trachoma Control \(ICTC\)](#) partners announce Pfizer's donation of the 500 millionth dose of Zithromax® (azithromycin) Tablets, an antibiotic used to treat trachoma in certain countries. The milestone marks significant achievement in global efforts to help eliminate this infectious and preventable eye disease that can lead to permanent blindness as a public health threat by the year 2020.

“This milestone highlights what is possible when partners work together toward a common goal and signifies remarkable achievement in our fight to eliminate trachoma globally,” said Virginia Sarah, chair, International Coalition for Trachoma Control, an alliance of organizations committed to supporting national program efforts in more than 30 countries to eliminate trachoma using the SAFE strategy, an approach that includes antibiotic treatment. “Our collective efforts are helping to reduce the impacts of this ancient, preventable disease on affected individuals, families and communities.”

Trachoma is an infectious disease, which can develop into a condition in which eyelids turn in and eyelashes scrape the eyeball, causing great pain, corneal ulcers and irreversible blindness. There are 232 million people in 58 countries at risk, with more than 80 percent of the global burden of the disease concentrated in 14 countries, mostly in Africa. Trachoma is responsible for the visual impairment of approximately 2.2 million people, 1.2 million of whom are irreversibly blind. It threatens entire socio-economic infrastructures and as a result, is estimated to cause USD \$3-6 billion in lost productivity per year across affected countries.

“I am extremely grateful to Pfizer for having donated 500 million doses of Zithromax in the fight against blinding trachoma to date,” said former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, founder of The Carter Center, a pioneer and partner in disease elimination activities. “The Carter Center is proud to have distributed more than 25 percent of those doses in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, the most trachoma-endemic area of the world, along with our partners Lions Clubs International Foundation and the Federal Ministry of Health. Together, we remain committed to eliminating blinding trachoma and reducing unnecessary suffering.”

Partners celebrating today are working as part of The World Health Organization (WHO)-led [Alliance for the Global Elimination of Trachoma by 2020 \(GET 2020\)](#). This Alliance is a unique collaboration of more than 100 governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sector partners implementing a WHO-recommended strategy called [“SAFE”](#) that combines:

- Surgery to treat the blinding stage of the disease,
- Antibiotics to treat infection, particularly administration of Zithromax,
- Facial cleanliness to help reduce transmission, and
- Environmental improvement, particularly improving access to water and sanitation.

This integrated strategy ensures that the positive impacts of antibiotic treatments are sustained through improved hygiene, while surgery ensures that those who cannot be cured are still treated to alleviate their discomfort and improve their quality of life. Since the Alliance was formed in 1998, partners have treated more than one hundred million people in 33 countries. In 2012, Oman became the first country to achieve WHO validation of trachoma elimination. In addition, China, Gambia, Ghana, Iran, Morocco, Myanmar and Vietnam have all reported the achievement of elimination goals to WHO, and are awaiting outcomes of the validation process.*

“At Pfizer we believe that access to quality healthcare and the opportunity to lead healthy lives is an extremely important social goal,” said Ian Read, chief executive officer, Pfizer. “The power and value of collaboration between public and private organizations in achieving that goal cannot be overstated. We are proud to work with our international partners on this mission to help end trachoma by 2020.”

Expansion of Ethiopian Program Begins Today

The burden of trachoma remains highest in Ethiopia, with 75 million people at risk, and the Federal Ministry of Health is working with Alliance partners to significantly expand the number of people in Ethiopia who are treated. Today, delegations from the U.K. and U.S. governments, NGOs and Pfizer are gathering in the Wolisso region of Ethiopia to celebrate the donation of the 500 millionth Zithromax dose and a significant expansion of the national trachoma elimination program in the country.

“Trachoma is on track for elimination as a public health problem in many countries thanks to the dedication of national programs, support of a coalition of partners and stakeholders and the collaboration of affected communities,” said Dr. Winnie Mpanju-Shumbusho, WHO assistant director-general for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases. “Tackling this leading infectious cause of blindness through the SAFE strategy yields additional benefits against other diseases of poverty, and provides an important opportunity to improve the overall health and livelihood of endemic populations.”

“As we celebrate our great progress, it is critical that we remain steadfast in our efforts to eliminate trachoma from the lives of everyone it affects,” said Dr. Paul Emerson, director, International Trachoma Initiative, the ICTC member organization that manages Pfizer’s Zithromax donation. “We have the partners, tools and momentum to beat this debilitating disease, and we are driving toward 2020 with a sense of urgency and determination. Together we can help ensure that all people of all nations will never have to endure the horror caused by trachoma.”

Learn more about Alliance for GET 2020 activities and join the online conversation by using #500MillionDoses.

Additional Partner Comments

Ministry of Health of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

“The expansion of the SAFE strategy across Ethiopia is vital in alleviating the sufferings of millions of our people and ultimately eradicating trachoma from our soil,” said His Excellency Dr. Kesetebirhan Admasu, Minister of Health of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. “The burden of trachoma is too high, but with the implementation of SAFE strategies, including Pfizer’s donation of Zithromax, and efficient partnership with international partners, we are determined to achieve this goal.”

United States Agency for International Development

“Our work with global allies in the fight against blinding trachoma truly signifies the power of collaboration to achieve global health wins. USAID has supported the delivery of Zithromax to trachoma-endemic countries around the world since 2007,” said Ariel Pablos-Méndez, assistant administrator for Global Health, USAID. “The reach and success of USAID’s efforts in trachoma under the neglected tropical disease (NTD) Program would not have been possible without the tremendous commitment from Pfizer. I congratulate all partners involved in the global trachoma effort for achieving this historic milestone.”

The Fred Hollows Foundation

“Working together with other partners, The Fred Hollows Foundation believes we can eliminate trachoma by 2020 and we are ramping up our efforts to tackle the disease in Ethiopia and around the world,” said Brian Doolan, chief executive officer, The Fred Hollows Foundation.

Lions Clubs International Foundation

“Lions Clubs International Foundation is committed to the elimination of avoidable blindness and the Lions SightFirst program is proud to be part of the global effort to eliminate trachoma as a public health problem. LCIF has supported the work of local Lions, The Carter Center and other NGO partners in Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nepal, Nigeria, and other countries for more than 15 years,” said Jim Ervin, past president, Lions Clubs International. “With the donation of the 500 millionth dose of Zithromax, we mark an important milestone in the fight against trachoma. We are making incredible progress, but our work is not done. The Lions and LCIF remains committed to the elimination of trachoma in Ethiopia and around the world.”

Orbis International

“The magnitude of this incredible milestone highlights the amazing power of partnerships and just what can be achieved when organizations work together towards a common goal. By recognizing each other’s strengths we have created an effective strategy to tackle trachoma. It’s hard to calculate the total impact of this work; hundreds of millions of lives have been positively affected by the distribution of Zithromax,” said Rebecca Cronin, chief executive officer, United Kingdom, Orbis International. “This action has empowered people to generate an income, build up economies through enabling a workforce to be free of this devastating condition and has helped children to gain an education. But we can do more, and we will continue to do so until this condition is stamped out across the world.”

The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust

“This is a remarkable milestone. The donation of Zithromax is proving to be an important catalyst for global progress towards the elimination of trachoma, an age-old, painful blinding disease,” said Dr. Astrid Bonfield, CBE, chief executive, The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust. “We are very grateful for Pfizer’s generous donation of Zithromax to the programs of The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust to combat trachoma in Commonwealth countries. The end of this disease and its devastating consequences will mean so much to the families and communities affected.”

RTI International

“The ENVISION project works with numerous countries around the world to reduce and ultimately eliminate trachoma in their communities. This year we are seeing countries complete all baseline trachoma prevalence mapping, a feat previously unthinkable,” said Lisa Rotondo, ENVISION project director, RTI International. “Mass drug administration is underway and is expanding to new areas where it's needed. At the same time, hundreds of districts are conducting impact assessments to determine whether trachoma has been reduced and where they can stop treatment with Zithromax. It's an incredibly exciting time – none of these accomplishments would have been possible without the partners' continued commitment to the global elimination campaign.”

Sightsavers

“Sightsavers is excited to be part of this huge public and private sector collaboration which truly demonstrates that by working together progress can be made in the global fight to eliminate this infectious and blinding disease. Over the last five years, we have supported the distribution of more than 37 million doses of Zithromax across Africa,” said Dr. Caroline Harper, chief executive officer, Sightsavers. “Three years ago, the U.K. government funded the Global Trachoma Mapping Project, the largest infectious disease mapping survey ever to be carried out. The project began in Ethiopia and as the global mapping nears completion, it seems only fitting that the 500 millionth dose is donated to Ethiopia, a country which has been a shining light in global efforts to eliminate trachoma.”

About The Alliance for GET 2020

The WHO-led Alliance for Global Elimination of Trachoma by the year 2020 (GET 2020) is a network of partners who are working across the globe to implement the SAFE strategy in areas most in need. Commitments and funding for these activities are provided by government agencies, including United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID), Pfizer Inc. and members of ICTC. Alliance members celebrating today include The Carter Center, The Fred Hollows Foundation, Helen Keller International, International Trachoma Initiative, Light for the World, Lions Clubs International Foundation, Orbis International, The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, RTI International, Sightsavers, and many others.

About the International Coalition for Trachoma Control

The International Coalition for Trachoma Control (ICTC) is a coalition of NGOs, donors, research/academic institutions and private sector organizations supporting efforts to eliminate trachoma by 2020. ICTC was formed in 2004 to support the WHO-led Alliance for the Global Elimination of Trachoma by the year 2020 (GET 2020) and advocate for the implementation of the WHO-endorsed SAFE strategy. For more information, please visit www.TrachomaCoalition.org.

About The International Trachoma Initiative

The International Trachoma Initiative (ITI) was founded in 1998 in response to the WHO call to achieve Global Elimination of Trachoma by the year 2020 (GET 2020). ITI's founding partners, Pfizer Inc. and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, saw the need for an international NGO dedicated solely to the elimination of trachoma. The ITI is currently administered by the Task Force for Global Health, an independent not for profit. To achieve that goal, ITI collaborates with governmental and NGO agencies at the local, national and international levels to implement the WHO-recommended SAFE strategy for trachoma control. For more information, please visit www.Trachoma.org.

Pfizer Inc.: Working together for a healthier world®

At Pfizer, we apply science and our global resources to bring therapies to people that extend and significantly improve their lives. We strive to set the standard for quality, safety and value in the discovery, development and manufacture of health care products. Our global portfolio includes medicines and vaccines as well as many of the world's best-known consumer health care products. Every day, Pfizer colleagues work across developed and emerging markets to advance wellness, prevention, treatments and cures that challenge the most feared diseases of our time. Consistent with our responsibility as one of the world's premier innovative biopharmaceutical companies, we collaborate with health care providers, governments and local communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care around the world. For more than 150 years, Pfizer has worked to make a difference for all who rely on us. To learn more, please visit us at www.pfizer.com.

**Not all countries listed receive Zithromax through the International Trachoma Initiative*

About ZITHROMAX IN THE UNITED STATES

INDICATIONS

ZITHROMAX is a macrolide antibacterial drug indicated for mild to moderate infections caused by designated, susceptible bacteria:

- Acute bacterial exacerbations of chronic bronchitis in adults
- Acute bacterial sinusitis in adults
- Uncomplicated skin and skin structure infections in adults
- Urethritis and cervicitis in adults
- Genital ulcer disease in men
- Acute otitis media in pediatric patients
- Community-acquired pneumonia in adults and pediatric patients
- Pharyngitis/tonsillitis in adults and pediatric patients

ZITHROMAX is not approved in the United States and EU to treat trachoma.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

- ZITHROMAX is contraindicated in patients with known hypersensitivity to azithromycin, erythromycin, any macrolide or ketolide drug and in patients with a history of cholestatic jaundice/hepatic dysfunction associated with prior use of azithromycin.
- Serious (including fatal) allergic and skin reactions including Stevens-Johnson syndrome, toxic epidermal necrolysis, and Drug Reaction with Eosinophilia and Systemic Symptoms (DRESS) have been reported in patients on azithromycin therapy. If an allergic reaction occurs, the drug should be discontinued and appropriate therapy should be instituted.
- Hepatotoxicity: Severe, and sometimes fatal, hepatotoxicity has been reported, Discontinue ZITHROMAX immediately if signs and symptoms of hepatitis occur.
- Prolongation of QT interval and cases of torsades de pointes have been reported. This risk which can be fatal should be considered in patients with certain cardiovascular disorders including known QT prolongation or history torsades de pointes, those with proarrhythmic conditions, and with other drugs that prolong the QT interval.
- Clostridium difficile-associated diarrhea: Evaluate patients if diarrhea occurs.
- ZITHROMAX may exacerbate muscle weakness in persons with myasthenia gravis.

- The most common adverse reactions are diarrhea (5 to 14%), nausea (3 to 18%), abdominal pain (3 to 7%), or vomiting (2 to 7%).

[Click here](#) for full Prescribing Information.

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