

Non-communicable diseases

MPP SIGNS FIRST-EVER CANCER LICENCE FOR LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

Recent years have seen tremendous progress with new technologies to treat cancer. Major challenges persist in low- and middle-income countries, however.

These countries still face great difficulties accessing new-generation cancer medicines – readily available to wealthier nations – that would allow patients to enjoy a better quality of life and to live longer.



Nilotinib is the first cancer licence with a public health focus anywhere in the world.

We are delighted that 2022 saw MPP sign the first ever voluntary licence agreement with Novartis to combat cancer in low- and middle-income countries.

Nilotinib, a twice-daily oral medication used to treat chronic myeloid leukaemia in adults and children at least one year old, will now become available to thousands of patients in low- and middle-income countries. The agreement with originator company Novartis AG means that generic companies will be able to produce and supply the medicine at affordable cost.

The licence in particular includes seven middle-income countries for which longer secondary patents on the product are pending or in force: Egypt, Guatemala, Indonesia, Morocco, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tunisia.

PRECEDENT FOR OTHER COMPANIES TO FOLLOW

Access to high-quality medicines is a crucial component of the global health response to cancer.



This first-ever voluntary licence for a non-communicable disease sets a precedent which it is hoped will be followed by other originator pharmaceutical companies.

FOCUS ON PARTNERSHIP: THE ACCESS TO ONCOLOGY MEDICINES COALITION



In May 2022, MPP joined the Access to Oncology Medicines (ATOM) Coalition. Led by the Union for International Cancer Control, the aim of this new global initiative is twofold: to improve access to essential cancer medicines in low- and lower-middle income countries, and to increase the capacity for diagnosing cancer and for the proper handling and supply monitoring of these medicines. MPP's role in the Coalition is to facilitate affordable access to cancer treatments through non-exclusive licences to generic manufacturers.

The approach that the ATOM Coalition has taken for the acquisition of new medications for cancer patients in low- and lower-middle income countries includes on-patent and off-patent medications. Sustained financially accessible on-patent medicines are only possible through voluntary licences (VLs). MPP's depth and breadth of experience and knowledge in utilizing VLs for infectious disease makes them the ideal partner for the ATOM Coalition to tackle the complexity and diversity of cancer therapies. Without a full spectrum of medications that MPP's participation and contribution will create, we would fail to meet the needs of our patients.

DR. DAN MILNER IS ATOM'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



WHAT OUR PARTNERS SAY

Other than explaining the scientific evidence of disease, our first contact with the patient is too often having to explain the issue of cost. Not everybody can afford to be treated, especially if that treatment is to last months and months. Pakistan along with other low-middle-income countries has a weak national health infrastructure for the treatment of cancer. Significant health inequities exist in LMICs, the government usually provides basic chemotherapies unfortunately expensive targeted therapies are not provided by the government.

I am very excited about the successful negotiation for nilotinib by MPP. With greater availability of cheaper but high-quality drugs, more patients will have access to treatment without significant financial toxicities. From my point of view, even though CML is an uncommon disease but access to Nilotinib will make a major difference. I'm very hopeful that once this one cancer drug becomes available through generic manufacturers, then it will encourage the manufacturing and availability of other cancer drugs too. I believe every drop in the ocean counts. Thus, significant savings with high-quality generics will help the governments to divert the savings for prevention early diagnosis, and treatment for other cancers.

MPP is doing a fantastic job of negotiating licences and getting things done. I'm very hopeful that MPP's role in negotiating with other drug companies will help in licences for generic drugs for other diseases which are major public health problems (lung, breast, colon). MPP will further expand access to generic drugs in low and middle-income countries and provide us with more affordable medicines. MPP has been of invaluable help, and I hope they continue to provide help for our part of the world. Congratulations MPP.

DR. ZEBA AZIZ IS A MEDICAL ONCOLOGIST WORKING IN PAKISTAN