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Novartis Foundation showcases progress in leprosy elimination programs at 19th International Leprosy Congress

- *Emerging evidence from first 18 months of LPEP program demonstrates operational feasibility integrating single-dose rifampicin into routine control programs in 6 countries*
- *Retrospective contact tracing of former leprosy patients in Cambodia initiates phase 2 to accelerate diagnosis*
- *Accuracy of first mobile phone-facilitated leprosy detection system to help identify patients in remote areas of the Philippines leads to recommendation for field use*
- *Criteria for development of a molecular diagnostic test for leprosy determined*

Basel, September 15, 2016 – The Novartis Foundation and its partners will highlight progress in efforts toward accelerating the elimination of leprosy at the 19th International Leprosy Congress (ILC) held in Beijing, China from September 18 – 21, 2016. Updates in 11 abstracts on four Novartis Foundation-supported leprosy initiatives in low- and middle-income countries will be showcased in scientific sessions.

Abstracts presented at the ILC demonstrate progress on the key programs under the Novartis Foundation strategy toward zero transmission of leprosy. The strategy was launched in 2014 to prioritize early detection and treatment, contact tracing and preventative treatment, strengthening of surveillance systems to become action-oriented and developing tools for faster and earlier diagnosis.

“The ILC is a great opportunity to present results of our leprosy strategy gaining momentum, share learnings, and highlight the research we support on diagnostic development and epidemiological modelling, which can contribute to the design of future strategies to finally make leprosy history. I am particularly pleased to share emerging evidence on our multi-country Leprosy Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (LPEP) program, which at mid-point is already demonstrating the feasibility of integrating its strategy of contact tracing and preventative therapy in national control programs,” said Dr. Ann Aerts, Head of the Novartis Foundation.

Novartis Foundation-sponsored projects presented at ILC scientific sessions:

- Cambodia Retrospective Active Case Finding project: recommendations for targeting high-priority districts in phase 2 (Abstract ILC4.2-052/8.5, September 19, 13:30 CST)
- Accuracy of the Leprosy Alert Response Network and Surveillance (LEARNS) System of the Novartis Foundation and Philippine Department of Health - National Leprosy Control Program (ILC4.2-025/8.3, September 19, 13:30 CST)
- Criteria for a developing a PCR test (Abstract 47.1, September 20, 10:30 CST)
- Emerging evidence from the Leprosy Post-Exposure Prophylaxis project (Abstract ILC4.3-012/17.1, September 20, 13:30 CST)

- An interim report on the operational feasibility of leprosy post-exposure prophylaxis in Dadra and Nagar Haveli, India (Abstract ILC4.3-014/17.2, September 20, 13:30 CST)
- Comparison of implementation aspects of Leprosy Post-Exposure Prophylaxis in India, Nepal and Indonesia (Abstract ILC4.3-022/17.3, September 20, 13:30 CST)
- Negotiating and implementing the Leprosy Post-Exposure Prophylaxis project in the centralized health service of the Union of Myanmar (Abstract ILC4.3-011/17.4, September 20, 13:30 CST)
- LPEP and implementation experiences from Nepal (Abstract ILC4.3-009/17.5, September 20, 13:30 CST)
- Modeling the long term impact of additional interventions on the new case detection rate of leprosy in three endemic countries and regions (Abstract ILC4.3-007/17.6, September 20, 13:30 CST)
- Delivering leprosy post-exposure prophylaxis in a remote area: a case of Lingat Village, Maluku, Indonesia (Abstract ILC4.3-017/25.6, September 20, 15:30 CST)
- Distribution of leprosy post-exposure prophylaxis through extended contact-tracing with self-screening approach in Sumenep District, Indonesia (Abstract ILC4.3-018/25.8, September 20, 15:30 CST)

“This year we commemorate 30 years of Novartis Foundation commitment in the fight against leprosy,” reflected Ann Aerts; “therefore the ILC is timely to review the progress we are making together with our partners toward zero transmission of leprosy. It is also a fitting time to look ahead and envision a coalition to bring the anti-leprosy community together to go the last mile in the fight against leprosy.”

Novartis and the Novartis Foundation have a long-term commitment to leprosy treatment and control. Since 2000, Novartis has donated more than 56 million blister packs valued at approximately USD 90 million through the World Health Organization (WHO), helping to treat more than six million leprosy patients worldwide.

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About the Novartis Foundation

The Novartis Foundation is a philanthropic organization pioneering innovative healthcare models that can have a transformational impact on the health of the poorest populations. We work hand-in-hand with our local and global partners to catalyze scalable and sustainable healthcare models to improve access and health outcomes, and to accelerate efforts to eliminate leprosy and malaria by focusing on interventions that aim to interrupt transmission. Everything we do is grounded in evidence and innovation, and our work is a continuous cycle of evaluation, adaptation and application. In 2015, the operational budget for the foundation was CHF 12 million and our programs reached 4.5 million people.

For more information, please visit:
www.novartisfoundation.org
www.youtube.com/novartisfoundation

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About Novartis

Novartis provides innovative healthcare solutions that address the evolving needs of patients and societies. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Novartis offers a diversified portfolio to best meet these needs: innovative medicines, eye care and cost-saving generic pharmaceuticals. Novartis is the only global company with leading positions in these areas. In 2015, the Group achieved net sales of USD 49.4 billion, while R&D throughout the Group amounted to approximately USD 8.9 billion (USD 8.7 billion excluding impairment and amortization charges). Novartis Group companies employ approximately 118,000 full-time-equivalent associates. Novartis products are available in more than 180 countries around the world. For more information, please visit <http://www.novartis.com>.

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