



Topics Take Action About

Search entries... FIND

Curing the disease of poverty: Non-profit drug development org announces new breakthrough in the fight against cholera



Credit: © Jonathan Torgovnik

The Institute for One World Health (iOWH) recently announced a new breakthrough in the fight against cholera and diarrheal disease, which together kill 1.5 million children every year. To learn more, we sat down with iOWH's Elena Pantjushenko, who shed light on the world of drug development for the world's poorest, the connection between cholera and poor sanitation and a lack of safe drinking water, and why this is a (really) big deal.

When you think of drug development, you immediately think of pharmaceutical giants and money-making machines. Tell us about the Institute for OneWorld Health and your mission.

We're a non-profit that develops safe, effective and affordable new medicines for people with infectious diseases in the developing world, with an emphasis on diseases that disproportionately affect children.

In addition to our current drug development programs, our Access Team works to ensure that the treatments OneWorld Health develops are available and acceptable to at-risk patients at an affordable cost via private and public sector markets.

You recently announced a major breakthrough in the fight against cholera. What happened?

Diarrheal diseases – cholera included – kill nearly five thousand children die every day: more children in developing countries than AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined. Of all childhood diseases, these have the greatest effect on growth, by reducing appetite, altering feeding patterns, and decreasing absorption of nutrients. The number of episodes in the first two years of life also affects fitness, cognitive function, and school performance.

Currently, the standard treatment for cholera and other infectious diarrheal disease is oral rehydration therapy (ORT) to manage life-threatening dehydration. While ORT is highly effective at saving lives, it does nothing to stem the fluid loss, and it must be continued for

Like it. Tweet it. Digg it.

Like 4,394 0

Be The Change: Save A Life on Facebook

Like

13,286 people like Be The Change: Save A Life.

Nate Okolie Lorenzo William Mariel

Alexandre Khaled Crissie Lola Hitesh

Facebook social plugin

Advertisement for abc NEWS Global Health with a "GO NOW" button and the word "ADVERTISEMENT" at the bottom.

the duration of the illness. Because they continue to experience symptoms, many do not complete the therapy before the disease has been eliminated.

We've been developing a new drug to reduce fluid loss, which recently received rapid FDA clearance and advanced to the next stage. It's designed to be used in conjunction with ORT, to increase adoption rates and provide faster relief of diarrhea symptoms. It's a huge achievement for a non-profit of our small size, and it could be the first synthetic drug of its kind for diarrheal diseases.

Diarrhea rarely kills children in the developed world. Why does it affect so many people elsewhere?

About 2 billion cases of diarrheal diseases occur every year, primarily in children in developing countries. Overall, over 1 billion people – one sixth of the world's population – suffer from one or more neglected tropical diseases. While infectious diseases account for only one out of ten deaths in the world's richest countries, they account for six out of ten deaths among the world's poorest people, according to the World Health Organization. The reality is that neglected diseases are perpetuated by poverty. Those most affected are the poorest populations often living in remote, rural areas, urban slums or in conflict zones. With little political voice, neglected tropical diseases have a low profile and status in public health priorities.

Why is this particularly significant on World Water Day?

More than 40 percent of the world lacks access to safe drinking water. Water contamination is a particular concern, because it is a leading cause of diarrheal diseases, which kill 1.5 million children every year - most of them children under five. What makes this number even more heart-breaking is how preventable these deaths can be today. In 2011, there is no reason for a child to die from cholera.

We stand firm in our commitment to relieve the burden of infectious diseases such as diarrhea, and we applaud all people and organizations that work hard to bring safe drinking water and improved sanitation to communities throughout the developing world.

What does the announcement mean for the development of other drugs and cures to diseases that disproportionately affect the world's poor?

This is a big deal: as it marks a powerful success story in our ability to discover, develop and deliver life-saving treatment to combat neglected diseases. We're out to voice the profound inequity that is clearly visible between the world's richest and poorest countries when it comes to health concerns, and we work to help balance that inequity by providing the world's citizens access to the treatments they need to survive and thrive.

Want to get involved? Click [here](#) to learn more and make a donation.

Filed under [Institute for One World Health](#), [Neglected Disease](#), [Cholera](#), [Diarrhea](#), [Water](#), [Water & Sanitation](#), [Pharmaceuticals](#), [World Water Day](#), [IQWH](#), [One World Health](#), [Elena Pantjushenko](#)

[Continue to next entry](#)

SPOTLIGHT *8.1 million children die before their fifth birthday.* [Take Action](#)



CONTRIBUTOR