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## **Merck, UCT and Medicines for Malaria Venture join forces to feed the antimalarial pipeline**

- **Merck, the University of Cape Town and Medicines for Malaria Venture create an antimalarial drug discovery platform, strengthening their partnership in the fight against malaria**
- **The partners will collaborate to build research capacity in Africa**
- **Merck's proprietary compound collection screened for activity against the human malaria parasite will feed this drug discovery platform**

The Merck Global Health Institute, the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) have joined forces to find new therapeutic solutions against malaria. Through this collaborative effort in drug discovery, the partners underscore their firm and long-term commitment to contribute to the discovery and development of new treatments to fight malaria.

Malaria afflicts over 200 million people in the developing world each year, and takes an estimated 445 000 lives, mostly young children and pregnant women.

This five-year project, co-funded by MMV and Merck, also includes a capacity building component to train African scientists in state-of-the-art research techniques to actively contribute to an international public-private research project.

In addition, Merck has provided access to 96 000 compounds from its corporate chemical library for screening against various stages of the Plasmodium parasite lifecycle and is providing in-kind drug discovery support and advice. "Aiming to achieve the goal of delivering new health solutions for local populations, this collaborative approach between an academic group, an industry organisation, and a non-profit entity is essential to the Merck Global Health Institute's operating model," said Dr Beatrice Greco, Head of the Research and Development and Access at the Merck Global Health Institute.

In addition to funding, MMV, a non-profit organisation, is providing expert knowledge and in-kind support to the project. "MMV has a long tradition of partnering with the pharmaceutical industry to identify new starting points for the development of new medicines to drive the eradication of malaria," said Dr Timothy Wells, MMV's Chief

Scientific Officer. “Merck’s expertise and long history of bringing new medicines to target important patient needs makes this a particularly exciting collaboration.”

Laboratory work and training will be conducted at the UCT’s H3D, Africa’s first integrated world-class drug discovery and development centre. “Besides contributing to the development of new therapeutic options to treat malaria patients, we are excited to provide opportunities for young African scientists to take part in the science and to improve their knowledge in drug discovery. Local capacity building is essential for the future of Africa-based research,” said Professor Kelly Chibale, Founder and Director of H3D.

## **Note to editors**

### **About Merck**

Merck is a leading science and technology company in healthcare, life science and performance materials. Around 40 000 employees work to further develop technologies that improve and enhance life – from biopharmaceutical therapies to treat cancer or multiple sclerosis, cutting-edge systems for scientific research and production, to liquid crystals for smartphones and LCD televisions. In 2014, Merck generated sales of €11.3 billion in 66 countries.

Founded in 1668, Merck is the world's oldest pharmaceutical and chemical company. The founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed corporate group. Merck, Darmstadt, Germany holds the global rights to the Merck name and brand. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the company operates as EMD Serono, EMD Millipore and EMD Performance Materials.

### **About the Merck Global Health Institute**

The Institute is a social business enterprise from Merck KgaA and aims to deliver comprehensive life-changing health solutions to allow a growing child to become a healthy adult in developing economies. Focusing primarily on schistosomiasis, malaria and antimicrobial resistances, the Institute performs R&D, access & local implementation activities by leveraging from Merck businesses.

### **About MMV**

MMV is a leading product development partnership (PDP) in the field of antimalarial drug research and development. Its mission is to reduce the burden of malaria in disease-endemic countries by enabling discovery, development and delivery of new, effective and affordable antimalarial drugs. Since its foundation in 1999, MMV and partners have developed and brought forward seven new medicines. In addition, MMV has taken over the stewardship of two approved artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs) developed by Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) and partners. Since 2009, over 1.5 million lives are estimated to have been saved by MMV co-developed drugs.

MMV and partners manage a portfolio of 65 projects, the largest portfolio of antimalarial R&D and access projects ever assembled. The portfolio includes nine new drugs in clinical development addressing unmet medical needs in malaria, including medicines for children, pregnant women and relapsing malaria, and drugs that could support the elimination/eradication agenda. MMV’s success in research and access & product management comes from its 160 active global partnerships. Since its inception in 1999, MMV has built an extensive network of over 400 pharmaceutical, academic and endemic-country partners in more than 55 countries.

MMV’s vision is a world in which innovative medicines will cure and protect the vulnerable and under-served populations at risk of malaria, and ultimately help to eradicate this terrible disease. MMV’s work is only possible due to the support of our partners and committed donors.

### **About the University of Cape Town (UCT)’s H3D**

H3D was founded in 2010 at UCT, the oldest university in South Africa and consistently highest-ranked African university. H3D officially opened its doors in April 2011 with the vision to be the leading organisation for integrated drug discovery and development on the African continent. Its mission is to discover and develop innovative, lifesaving medicines for African patients through excellence in interdisciplinary, translational science while also training African scientists to be world experts.

H3D has been active in malaria and tuberculosis drug discovery, and is now expanding into drug resistant infections of bacterial origin. It currently comprises more than 60 scientific staff members in the areas of medicinal chemistry, biology as well as Drug Metabolism and Pharmacokinetics. H3D has state-of-the-art laboratories and has the necessary infrastructure to conduct integrated drug discovery projects to deliver clinical candidates.

***ENDS***

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