Addressing scabies, the neglected of the neglected diseases.

Moxidectin as a new treatment for scabies – AU$3 million investment in a pivotal Phase II study

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Medicines Development for Global Health (MDGH), a global health biotechnology company and social enterprise, is pleased to announce the receipt of AU$3 million to support the clinical development of moxidectin for scabies treatment and elimination. This represents the largest single investment to address the scourge of scabies, a disease that disproportionately affects the most disadvantaged people in the world, including Australian Indigenous communities. MDGH has been awarded AU$1.5 million from Austrade’s Australian Tropical Medicines Commercialisation Program with matching funding from the Global Health Investment Fund (GHIF). The development of moxidectin as a potential new treatment for scabies is part of MDGH’s ongoing strategy to address a number of global health issues with preparation currently underway for an application to the United States Food and Drug Administration for moxidectin as a new treatment for river blindness.

Scabies is a highly contagious, debilitating mite infestation of the skin affecting between 120-300 million people worldwide and has been recognized as a pandemic neglected tropical disease by the World Health Organization. With the funding, MDGH will undertake a Phase II study to establish the optimal dose of moxidectin in scabies infection. Pre-clinical proof of concept has been achieved, and MDGH already has substantial toxicology, manufacturing and clinical safety data for moxidectin.

‘This innovative Australian company plans to conduct Australia-centred development of moxidectin for scabies, a pandemic disease but one which is endemic in Australian Indigenous communities and the South Pacific region. The effort has enormous potential global impact and is close to market’ said Curt LaBelle of the GHIF.

‘This project is an advance of global significance, joining Australian research and translational expertise with government in a unique opportunity to rapidly deliver the first new treatment for scabies in decades. We are very grateful to Austrade and GHIF for helping us to address this important issue’ said Mark Sullivan of MDGH.

About Scabies: Scabies infestation is caused by the microscopic mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. The fertilized female mite burrows into the skin, depositing eggs in the tunnel behind her. After the eggs are hatched, larvae migrate to the skin surface and eventually mature into the adult form. Common symptoms of scabies infection include severe itching and skin rash, an allergic response to the mite. A less common form of the disease, crusted scabies, occurs when an individual is infested with large numbers of mites and can be fatal. Scabies spreads principally by direct skin-to-skin contact and to a lesser extent through contact with infested garments and bedclothes. Scabies mites are found worldwide, affecting all socioeconomic classes and in all climates, with about 300 million cases of scabies in the world each year. Epidemics have been linked to poverty, poor water supply and sanitation and overcrowding.

About Medicines Development for Global Health: Medicines Development Limited (ACN 116 977 523) trading as Medicines Development for Global Health is a not-for-profit biopharmaceutical company headquartered in Melbourne, Australia. This unique organisation was established in 2005 by a team of industry veterans to undertake the development and delivery of new medicines and
vaccines to address unmet medical needs prevalent in low- to middle-income countries. The company works on the development of a portfolio of products, including vaccines, small molecules and biological therapies, targeting predominantly infectious, immunologic and oncologic diseases.

About the Global Health Investment Fund: The Global Health Investment Fund is a US$108 million social impact investment fund designed to provide financing to advance the development of drugs, vaccines, diagnostics and other interventions against diseases that disproportionately burden low- and middle-income countries. GHIF supports late stage innovations for public health challenges, with an emphasis on infectious diseases and maternal/infant health issues that cause significant morbidity and mortality in resource-limited settings. For additional information about the Global Health Investment Fund, please visit www.ghif.com

About the Australian Tropical Medicines Commercialisation Grants Programme: The Australian Tropical Medicines Commercialisation Grants Programme helps Australian businesses and public sector research organisations to develop pathways to commercialise Australian tropical medical research in partnership with international organisations. Grant funding totalling $7.1 million is aimed to build connections between Australian research institutes and the global health sector, including international pharmaceutical companies and philanthropic organisations.

For additional information about the Programme, please visit www.austrade.gov.au/International/Invest/Opportunities/tropical-medicine

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