What's in a...'Debossed Code'?

Have you ever taken a tablet and wondered exactly what the strange combination of letters and numbers stamped on the surface of the pill means? Just like with the license or number plate on a car, there often isn't any hidden meaning behind the code. It's simply a unique identifier that makes each tablet readily identifiable by healthcare providers and patients. But in many countries, it **IS** possible to designate your own plates with letters or numbers that are personally meaningful.

We wanted to do this with moxidectin, the first new treatment for river blindness (onchocerciasis) in 30 years.

When we reached the point in the manufacturing process to choose the identifier code for moxidectin tablets, we chose to imprint (deboss) the letters AKKA onto every single tablet. The meaning is very important to us: these are the combined initials of 2 people who have been absolutely central to the development of moxidectin for the fight against river blindness.

The AK is for Dr Annette Kuesel from TDR, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, cosponsored by UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization (WHO). She has been the only constant for moxidectin during its clinical development life. That we even got to this point is almost entirely due to her tenacity and passion. She will provide her expertise and experience for further trials of moxidectin needed to ensure that WHO and the countries affected by river blindness have all the data they need to decide whether, where, and how to use moxidectin for the elimination of this disease.

The other initials, KA, belong to the late Dr Kwablah Awadzi (June 13, 1939-March 16, 2011). Dr Awadzi was a monumental figure in the fight against river blindness throughout his life. He founded the Onchocerciasis Chemotherapy Research Center (OCRC) in Ghana and dedicated his life to researching more effective treatments and to training the next generation of African clinical researchers. This included clinical and community studies of ivermectin, the drug currently used by onchocerciasis endemic countries to treat tens of millions of people each year.

He and his team established the methods used in the clinical trials of moxidectin in people with river blindness. Millions of Africans have benefitted from programs and principles championed by him, and his legacy spreads far and wide.

Dr Annette Kuesel & Dr Kwablah Awadzi

Dr Awadzi was a dear friend and mentor to Dr Kuesel. He called her his twin and always sensed across thousands of kilometers when she needed a taste of his wonderful brand of humor. Dr. Awadzi designed and led the first study of moxidectin in people with river blindness and was instrumental in designing the pivotal study and helping Dr Kuesel and the investigators in Ghana, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to conduct it.

Dr Awadzi passed away suddenly on March 16, 2011. On what would have been his 79th birthday, June 13, 2018, the FDA approved moxidectin for the treatment of river blindness in people aged 12 and older.

Imprinting AKKA is our small way of honouring the legacy of these 2 heroes who have dedicated their lives to improving human health.

Medicines Development
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