



News Release

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Merck and Partners Make Progress In Long-Term Commitment to End River Blindness

Colombia to Request Certification by the World Health Organization of Historic Elimination of River Blindness

WHITEHOUSE STATION, N.J. and Bogota, Colombia, Nov. 11, 2011 – Public health officials at the 21st Inter-American Conference on Onchocerciasis in Bogota, Colombia announced that Colombia has eliminated onchocerciasis (river blindness) within its borders, making it the first country suffering from river blindness in the Americas to reach this goal. It also was announced that Guatemala and Mexico have now broken the cycle of transmission of river blindness. Both countries will halt their drug treatment programs for the disease in 2012 and begin the three-year post treatment monitoring process, already completed by Colombia, and required by the World Health Organization (WHO) to certify elimination of the disease. Officials attribute the successes in Latin America to a sustained public-private partnership led by The Carter Center that offers health education and drug treatment donated by Merck.

The Carter Center – through its Onchocerciasis Elimination Program for the Americas (OEPA) partnership – assists national ministries of health in six affected countries in Latin America to conduct health education and distribute Merck's medicine, ivermectin (registered trademark MECTIZAN). Other members of the partnership include the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Lions Clubs International Foundation, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

“River blindness is a devastating disease that multiplies the challenges and burdens already faced by poverty stricken populations,” said former U.S. President and Carter Center founder Jimmy Carter. “Thanks to thousands of dedicated health workers and volunteers in the Americas and the generosity of Merck and the Mectizan Donation Program, this public health threat will soon be eliminated from the Western Hemisphere.”

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"It is tremendously rewarding to see our partnership starting to achieve its long held goal of making river blindness a disease of the past. These milestones clearly demonstrate that public-private partnerships like this one are critical to achieving real improvements in global health," said Kenneth C. Frazier, President and CEO of Merck.

PAHO's Directing Council passed a resolution in 2008 calling for the interruption of transmission of river blindness in Latin America by 2012. In Latin America, river blindness has historically affected people in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela.

Starting in 2012, approximately 80 percent of the half-million people in the region previously at risk will no longer be in need of treatment for river blindness. With today's news, Guatemala and Mexico join Colombia and Ecuador in having broken disease transmission country-wide. The two remaining affected countries, Brazil and Venezuela, will continue treatment in hopes of also interrupting transmission by the end of the next year.

The MECTIZAN Donation Program

In October 1987, Merck announced it would donate the medication MECTIZAN to all who need it for as long as necessary until onchocerciasis is eliminated as a public health problem. The MECTIZAN Donation Program reaches more than 100 million people annually. www.mectizan.org

In Latin America, since 1989, more than 10 million treatments of donated MECTIZAN have been delivered by community health workers and non-governmental organizations.

About The Carter Center's OEPA

The Carter Center – through its sponsorship of Onchocerciasis Elimination Program of the Americas (OEPA) – is leading a coalition of partners in a historic effort to eliminate river blindness from the Western Hemisphere. The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide. For more information, visit www.oepa.net or www.cartercenter.org

About Merck

Today's Merck is a global healthcare leader working to help the world be well. Merck is known as MSD outside the United States and Canada. Through our prescription medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies, and consumer care and animal health products, we work with customers and operate in more than 140 countries to deliver innovative health solutions. We also demonstrate our commitment to increasing access to healthcare through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. For more information, visit www.merck.com and connect with us on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

Forward-Looking Statement

This news release includes "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of the safe harbor provisions of the United States Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Such statements may include, but are not limited to, statements about the benefits of the merger between Merck and Schering-Plough, including future financial and operating results, the combined company's plans, objectives, expectations and intentions and other statements that are not historical facts. Such statements are based upon the current beliefs and expectations of Merck's management and are subject to significant risks and uncertainties. Actual results may differ from those set forth in the forward-looking statements.

The following factors, among others, could cause actual results to differ from those set forth in the forward-looking statements: the possibility that the expected synergies from the merger of Merck and Schering-Plough will not be realized, or will not be realized within the expected time period; the impact of pharmaceutical industry regulation and health care legislation; the risk that the businesses will not be integrated successfully; disruption from the merger making it more difficult to maintain business and operational relationships; Merck's ability to accurately predict future market conditions; dependence on the effectiveness of Merck's patents and other protections for innovative products; the risk of new and changing regulation and health policies in the United States and internationally and the exposure to litigation and/or regulatory actions.

Merck undertakes no obligation to publicly update any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Additional factors that could cause results to differ materially from those described in the forward-looking statements

can be found in Merck's 2010 Annual Report on Form 10-K and the company's other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) available at the SEC's Internet site (www.sec.gov).

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