

Next-generation antimalarial treatment

Novartis has announced that it will further expand its long-standing partnership with Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) to develop next-generation antimalarial treatments.



Image by 123RF

Novartis will develop antimalarial compound KAF156 with scientific and financial support from MMV, in collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This agreement sets out the terms and conditions for the development of KAF156 and its future availability to patients. With a child dying from malaria every two minutes and the threat of drug resistance growing year-on-year, there is a real urgency to step up global efforts to combat this disease,” said Joseph Jimenez, CEO of Novartis. “Partnerships and collaborations like this one with MMV are essential for the development of next generation antimalarials and accelerating efforts to eradicate this deadly disease.”

KAF156 belongs to a novel class of antimalarial molecules and is one of the first antimalarial drug candidates to enter Phase IIb clinical development in more than 20 years. It acts against the two parasites responsible for the majority of malaria deaths (*Plasmodium falciparum* and *Plasmodium vivax*) and against both the blood and liver stages of the parasite’s lifecycle.

Further, it has the potential to provide a more convenient dosing regimen and to address the multidrug resistance that has emerged in five countries of the Great Mekong Sub-region (GMS). KAF156 builds on the heritage of Novartis in antimalarial drug development and the launch in 1999 of Coartem, the first fixed-dose Artemisinin-based Combination Therapy (ACT). ACT is the current standard of care in malaria treatment.

“We are delighted to extend our partnership with Novartis in the development of this exciting candidate antimalarial medicine with the potential to tackle drug resistance and improve patient compliance,” said Dr David Reddy, CEO of MMV. “As such, this agreement marks an important milestone, as MMV continues its mission to discover, develop and deliver new, effective and affordable antimalarials to the patients who need them most.”

The Novartis Malaria Initiative is committed to drive research, development and access to novel drugs to eliminate malaria. It is one of the pharmaceutical industry’s largest access-to-medicine programs. Since 2001, the initiative has delivered more than 750 million treatments without profit, including 300 million dispersible paediatric treatments, developed by Novartis in collaboration with MMV, mostly to the public sector of malaria-endemic countries.

Although preventable and treatable, malaria continues to kill a child every two minutes and threatens the lives of many more. It is caused by parasites transmitted to people through the bite of infected mosquitoes. A comprehensive range of interventions is required to eradicate the disease, from bed nets and spraying for prevention to diagnostics and medicines to treat the disease and block its transmission.

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