New Pediatric Formulation to Fight Schistosomiasis in Young Children

A Public Private Consortium consisting of Merck KGaA, Astellas Pharma Inc., Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute and TI Pharma

A Neglected Tropical Disease
Schistosomiasis is a water-borne parasitic disease caused by trematodes (flatworms) belonging to the Schistosoma genus

Impact
- At least 240 million infected people
- About 780 million people at risk
- > 200,000 deaths in Africa
- High burden of disease (disabled children with chronic inflammation)
- High prevalence of infection in young children (up to 75% in certain areas)

Geography
Endemic in 78 countries across Africa, South America, Middle East and Asia, with more than 70% of the global burden in 10 countries in Africa.

Current Treatment
Praziquantel (PZQ) is an oral anti-helminthic drug, donated by the Merck – WHO Partnership to fight Schistosomiasis. Developed in the 1970s, it has proven to be safe and efficacious.

Current drug is a racemic mixture of levopraziquantel (L-PZQ) and dextropraziquantel (D-PZQ). D-PZQ has been reported to be pharmacologically inactive and responsible for a significant contribution to the bitter taste.

The Neglected Population
For young children (< 6 years) treatment with the current PZQ tablet is not appropriate:
- Bitter taste leads to gagging or vomiting
- The size of the current tablet is significant
- Not sufficient clinical data in very young children

Clear need for a new pediatric formulation to treat young children

The consortium was established in 2012 and works on short and long term solutions

Development of a pediatric formulation of the current racemic PZQ
- Improvement of taste
- More appropriate for use in young children (> 2 years)

Development of a pediatric formulation of the enantiopure L-PZQ
- Improvement of taste and fewer intake of medication
- Clinical development to support treatment of young children, including the 3 months - 2 years age group

Experts on Praziquantel and committed to eliminate Schistosomiasis
Experts on innovative drug formulation strategies
Experts in the field of clinical trials in endemic countries and antischistosomal drug discovery
Experts in managing public private partnerships in drug research and development