

Greater R&D funding needed to fight diseases affecting world's poor

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Despite significant advancements in increasing distribution and development of vaccines against childhood killer diseases – including pneumococcal disease, rotavirus, and Haemophilus influenzae Type B – global efforts to reduce the burden of infection from neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) has greatly lagged, argues Sabin Vaccine Institute (Sabin) President Dr. Peter Hotez in an article for the June edition of *Health Affairs*.

NTDs, a group of 17 parasitic infections, represent a significant contributor to global poverty, and have well documented chronic and disabling effects. Yet efforts to develop vaccines for NTDs have not benefitted from larger ongoing initiatives to combat major childhood diseases.

In his article, "A Handful of 'Antipoverty' Vaccines Exist for Neglected Diseases, But the World's Poorest Billion People Need More," Dr. Hotez cites three critical reasons for the lack of interest in "antipoverty" vaccines:

- Though NTDs disable, they do not typically cause high levels of mortality leading some in the public health community to misleadingly conclude that NTDs are not a significant public health threat;
- NTDs predominately occur in rural settings and are largely

hidden diseases unknown to the public and infrequently documented; and,

- Pharmaceutical companies are reluctant to make an investment in NTD vaccines because there is no financial incentive.

Public-private partnerships increasingly represent an innovative mechanism for developing NTD vaccines, states Dr. Hotez in his article. In particular, manufacturers from middle-income countries are increasingly partnering with U.S. organizations and academic institutions to generate a pipeline of vaccines for NTDs. Sabin's [vaccine](#) development program – currently developing vaccines for human hookworm infection and schistosomiasis – represents one of a limited number of such partnerships.

Dr. Hotez concludes by stating that "developing a new generation of antipoverty vaccines represents a highly innovative and meaningful approach to eliminating the world's neglected diseases, lifting the bottom billion out of poverty, and promoting international diplomacy."

To expand its own vaccine development efforts, Sabin recently announced a new partnership with Texas Children's Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) to build a new center in Houston dedicated to developing vaccines for diseases of poverty. Sabin will transfer its vaccine operations to new laboratories at Texas Children's Hospital in September and will continue working with existing and new partners. As part of the move, Dr. Hotez also will become the founding dean of a new national school of tropical medicine at BCM that will train a new generation of medical practitioners focused on diseases of poverty.

Provided by Sabin Vaccine Institute

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