

Most NCDs could be treated with small number of cheap generic drugs and within existing budgets

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In the fifth Series paper, researchers led by Professor Hans Hogerzeil from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands say that most NCDs could be treated with a small range of inexpensive, off-patent medicines, and suggest that substantial improvements in availability of life-saving drugs in poorer nations could be achieved within existing budgets by more careful selection and sourcing of generic versions, and better targeting of people at highest risk.

They point to examples such as: generic insulin that could be made available in many low-income and middle-income countries at prices five to eight times cheaper than those currently paid for newer and branded products; and multidrug regimens for people at high-[risk of cardiovascular disease](#) that could cost as little as US\$1 per head per year and prevent 18 million deaths in 23 of the poorest nations over the next 10 years.

However, they say, better selection and procurement policies alone will not be enough to make life-saving medicines and vaccines affordable to all people that need them.

They outline several other key measures including: increased investment from domestic sources through tax-based or obligatory health-insurance; integrating drug management within existing initiatives for HIV/AIDS to achieve uninterrupted availability of NCD drugs and adherence to long-

term treatment; increasing the unacceptable low availability of opioid medication for [pain management](#); and coherent and equitable health and trade policies to guarantee access to newer, patented drugs.

"Access to medicines and vaccines to prevent and treat NCDs is unacceptably low worldwide. Only with these approaches [outlined in this paper] can a difference be made to the lives of hundreds of millions of current and future patients with NCDs", they conclude.

More information: www.thelancet.com/series/non-communicable-diseases

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