

A multi-million dollar fight to save women's lives

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Dr Michelle McIntosh

A new medicine to prevent the death of tens of thousands of women every year because of a fatal loss of blood after childbirth, is within sight as a result of a multi-million dollar partnership.

The international group of funders, comprised of the McCall MacBain Foundation, Grand Challenges Canada, Planet Wheeler Foundation, and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), announced today during the United Nations General Assembly in New York that they will partner with the Monash Institute for Pharmaceutical Sciences (MIPS) at Monash University to

develop this new medicine.

Every year nearly 300,000 [women](#) die due to pregnancy-related causes. A simple injection of oxytocin can prevent or treat postpartum bleeding, but in [developing countries](#), where women are most at risk, the drug isn't readily available because it needs cold storage, and to be administered by doctors or nurses.

The partnership will accelerate the research and development program led by Dr Michelle McIntosh from MIPS, to develop an affordable medicine for women in developing countries, using a device that allows women to inhale an oxytocin dry powder immediately after delivery.

Dr McIntosh said the risk of postpartum bleeding is overwhelming in developing countries, yet the condition can be easily prevented.

"In developed countries, oxytocin is the gold standard therapy, so deaths from post-partum bleeding are very rare. Yet women in developing countries don't have access to this life saving drug because it requires refrigeration and trained staff to administer it," she said.

"By developing this drug in an easy to inhale powder, we can improve access globally to a life-saving medicine."

Women in Sub-Saharan Africa are 47 times more likely to die as a result of pregnancy or birth than women in the US. Researchers say the oxytocin inhaler means more women, especially in rural areas or poorly resourced clinics will be able to access the life saving drug.

Director of MIPS, Professor Bill Charman, said the broad-based international partnership future proofs major research.

"Thanks to the generosity and support of our partners, turning this

research into a new medicine that has the potential to save lives globally is now within our grasp," Professor Charman said.

"This is an exciting and impactful time, not only for MIPS, but for the organisations in this collaboration to make a significant impact in improving maternal mortality rates in the developing world."

Provided by Monash University

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