

Neglected tropical diseases—progress towards addressing the chronic pandemic

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The *Lancet* published a review of the progress made in addressing, as lead author David Molyneux calls it, the chronic pandemic of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

LSTM's Senior Professorial Fellow David Molyneux worked with Dr Dirk Engels, who heads up NTDs for the World Health Organization (WHO), and Dr Lorenzo Savioli of the Global Schistosomiasis Alliance, to put together the review.

The authors looked at the progress made in terms of the donated medicines which are used in mass drug administration (MDA) interventions, which represent something in the region of one billion treatments a year. They also highlighted some of the challenges that need to be addressed to ensure the massive impact of NTDs is fully mitigated.

Professor Molyneux said: "It is testament to how far we've come that NTDs have been included in United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and are now recognised as true markers of poverty. But there is still no recognition of the true level of mortality associated with this particular group of diseases. Around 12 thousand people died as a result of the recent Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, but during the same period of time at least 10 times that many people died as a result of NTDs."

The paper frames the progress made in the field of NTDs against the challenges that remain to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

These include those of a biological and socioeconomic nature as well as environmental issues such as security, conflict and extreme climate change, the latter also having an impact on the vectors of many of these diseases.

"It is important that we see continued investment into the research of NTDs," continued Professor Molyneux. "We need new drugs to combat resistance and better diagnostic tools in order to identify and monitor these diseases. However with around \$3 Billion in donated drugs available, what is vital is the commitment of endemic countries to provide the relatively small amounts of health spend that will ensure these drugs reach those most in need, ending the cycle of disease and poverty that has perpetuated this chronic pandemic."

More information: Neglected tropical diseases: progress towards addressing the chronic pandemic; Prof David H Molyneux, Lorenzo Savioli, MD, Dirk Engels, MD; *The Lancet*; DOI: [dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)30171-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)30171-4)

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