

Program aims to get lifesaving drugs to kids with cancer in poorer countries

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(HealthDay)—A new program to boost the supply of cancer medicines

for children in low- and middle-income countries has been announced by the World Health Organization (WHO) and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

The hospital is making a six-year, \$200 million investment to launch the [Global Platform for Access to Childhood Cancer Medicines](#), which will provide medicines at no cost to participating countries in the pilot phase. This is the largest financial commitment for a global effort in [childhood cancer](#) medicines to date, according to the hospital.

"Close to nine in 10 children with [cancer](#) live in low- and [middle-income countries](#)," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a hospital news release.

"Survival in these countries is less than 30%, compared with 80% in high-income countries. This new platform, which builds on the success of the [Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer](#) launched with St. Jude in 2018, will help redress this unacceptable imbalance and give hope to many thousands of parents faced with the devastating reality of a child with cancer," he added.

Each year, an estimated 400,000 children worldwide develop cancer, but most childhood cancer patients living in low- and middle-income countries can't consistently get or afford cancer medicines. That results in nearly 100,000 deaths each year.

During the platform's initial two-year pilot phase, [childhood cancer](#) medicines will be purchased and distributed to 12 countries. Discussions are underway to determine the countries that will participate in this pilot phase. Other countries will be added after that.

By the end of 2027, it's expected that the platform will have provided medicines to about 120,000 children in 50 countries.

Dr. Carlos Rodriguez-Galindo is executive vice president and chair of the St. Jude Department of Global Pediatric Medicine and director of St. Jude Global. He said, "Unless we address the shortage and poor quality of cancer medicines in many parts of the world, there are very few options to cure these children. Health care providers must have access to a reliable source of cancer medicines that constitute the current standard of care. We at St. Jude, with our co-founding partners at WHO and many vital partners around the world, can help achieve that."

More information: The World Health Organization has more on [childhood cancer](#).

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