Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation Announces Funding of Nearly $1 Million to Address Needs in Hepatitis B and C Awareness, Prevention and Care in China and India

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BANGKOK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation has awarded four new grants to help improve awareness, prevention and care of hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis C (HCV) in China and India. The grants total nearly $1 million USD and bring the Foundation’s commitment to reducing hepatitis-related health disparities in Asia to $8 million USD over the past three years. The grant recipients were announced at the Asian Pacific Association for the Study of the Liver (APASL) 2011 Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, where leaders in the hepatology field gathered to promote scientific advancement and education in the Asia Pacific region.1

The mission of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is to help reduce health disparities in communities where the need is greatest. China and India together have an estimated 123 million people chronically infected with HBV and 59 million people chronically infected with HCV, accounting for almost 50 percent of all HBV and HCV infections worldwide.2, 3

The Foundation’s work related to hepatitis in Asia falls under the Delivering Hope™: Awareness, Prevention and Care umbrella programme. To date, Delivering Hope has supported 32 programme grants across Asia, specifically 14 grants in mainland China, three in Taiwan, 12 in India and three in Japan.

“Our four new grant recipients reflect the best use of resources to reduce hepatitis B- and C- related disparities in China and India. They mobilise, serve and strengthen their local communities’ health care armament in the fight against these diseases,” said John Damonti, president, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation.

“We look forward to improved hepatitis awareness, prevention and care in these countries’ communities, as well as to applying our key learnings from these programmes in other countries.”

In keeping with the Foundation’s commitment to sharing lessons learned, funding recipients will prepare a comprehensive final report at the completion of their projects. These reports will be shared with the HBV and HCV community to enhance the body of knowledge on hepatitis prevention, care, and support.

Chinese Grant Recipient Aims to Inform HCV Public Policy

Approximately 40 million people are infected with HCV in China, leading the Chinese government to declare it an urgent public health issue.4 HCV prevalence is estimated to continue to grow, and associated comorbidities such as liver disease, cirrhosis and cancer, are a growing health concern.5

The Chinese grant winner, the Wu Jieping Medical Foundation, will conduct an operational study of the socio-economic burden of HCV patients and their families in China. The study will aim to recommend policies that will improve prevention and access to care. The grant will also fund a comprehensive intervention programme for a cohort of HCV patients.

India Grants Provide Hepatitis Education, Vaccination for Multiple Audiences

India is one the fastest growing economies, yet approximately 25-30 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. More than 30 million people in India are infected with HBV 6 and 19 million are infected with HCV. 7

The Foundation has awarded three grants to India-based organizations. United Way Mumbai will conduct an extensive HBV and HCV awareness campaign targeted at college students and high-risk groups. The campaign will promote HBV vaccination, HBV and HCV diagnosis and early referral to care. The Hepatitis Foundation of Tripura in conjunction with the government of the state of Tripura will institute at-birth HBV vaccinations and train health care professionals and community groups on disease education for mothers and their families. The Health Oriented Programmes and Education (HOPE) Initiative is a public-private sector partnership that will provide HBV education for school children in Uttar Pradesh, in the hope of spreading the word among their families and local communities. The Uttar Pradesh State government has endorsed the programme and will be an active partner in developing it across India’s most populous state.

About Chronic Hepatitis B

Chronic hepatitis B is a serious global health issue and is transmitted by person-to-person contact with infected blood or bodily fluids. Worldwide, more than 2 billion people have been in contact with the hepatitis B virus and approximately 350 million people are chronically infected,8 resulting in about one million deaths annually from liver cancer, cirrhosis or liver failure.9
About Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a virus that infects the liver and is transmitted through direct contact with blood. An estimated 170 million people worldwide are infected with hepatitis C. One to five percent of people with chronic infection will develop liver cancer. Although there is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C, it is a curable disease.

About Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation and Delivering Hope

The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is an independent charitable organisation whose mission is to reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes around the world for patients disproportionately affected by serious disease. The Foundation accomplishes this by strengthening community-based health care worker capacity, integrating medical care and community-based supportive services, and mobilising communities in the fight against disease.

Since 2002, the Foundation has supported efforts in Asia, initially focusing on preventing mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B and promoting hepatitis B immunisation in China. In 2006, the Foundation expanded those efforts to provide broader support for hepatitis B and C awareness, prevention and education, including the adoption of hepatitis B and C interventions and education in public health programmes.

Today, the Foundation’s priority hepatitis B and C programmes encompass capacity building for health care professionals and lay health workers, disease education and awareness, and sharing of best practices in the prevention and management of hepatitis B and C to inform public health policy.

Beyond hepatitis, the Foundation also focuses on HIV/AIDS in Africa through its SECURE THE FUTURE® programme; cancer in Central and Eastern Europe through its Bridging Cancer Care programme; and diabetes and mental-health in the United States through its Together On Diabetes and Mental Health and Well-Being programmes. For more information, view the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation’s Web site at: http://www.bms.com/foundation/pages/home.aspx


2 WHO. Available at: www.who.int/csr/disease/hepatitis/en/.


6 Singh SP. Hepatitis B Eradication Day: It’s never too late!!. Hep B Annual 2006; 3:11-13

7 World Health Organisation. Department of Veteran Affairs; Centres for Medicare and Medicaid Services; Datamonitor 2006.


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