

TB battle: Eli Lilly transfers technology to companies

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Eli Lilly has published details of its long-standing technology transfer program to increase the global supply of medicines for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB). Begun in 2003, the effort included Lilly donating manufacturing technology and know-how for two antibiotics to pharmaceutical manufacturers in China, India, Russia and South Africa - all MDR-TB 'hot spots.' It also served as the foundation for the Lilly MDR-TB Partnership, the company's largest-ever philanthropic effort.

The technology transfer was Lilly's response to a dramatic global rise in MDR-TB cases in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Until that time, Lilly manufactured and supplied nominal quantities of two TB medicines - capreomycin and cycloserine. After independent researchers found that these two TB medicines were also effective in treating drug-resistant TB, Lilly doubled production and subsidized prices of the medicines. However, global demand was projected to quickly outpace manufacturing capacity, and Lilly sought a longer-term solution for people needing these medicines.

After close consultation with global TB experts, Lilly embarked on a novel approach: transferring its manufacturing technology and know-how for capreomycin and cycloserine free of charge to seven manufacturers in four countries. In India, the technology transfer of second line drug cycloserine has been completed with Shasun Chemicals and Drugs, Chennai.

"We thought bigger," commented Dr John Lechleiter, Lilly's chairman, president and chief executive officer, in a video about the decision to undertake the technology transfer. "I am very proud of the fact that we looked beyond the question of can we supply these medicines. With a lot of Lilly people contributing their time and talents and working with multiple partners, it's been an extraordinary story and an extraordinary accomplishment."

"Sustainable access to quality-assured medicines has been our aim throughout this long initiative," said Dr Evan Lee, vice president of Lilly's Global Health Programs. "All seven of our partners have received regulatory approvals, including those from the World Health Organization's prequalification program and other stringent regulatory authorities, to supply high quality

versions of these two medicines to people with MDR-TB."

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