

144th Session of the WHO Executive Board, 24 January – February 1st, 2019 Geneva

Agenda 5.7: Medicines, vaccines and health products

Response to WHO Report EB144/17: http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB144/B144_17-en.pdf

Honourable Chair, distinguished delegates,

The majority of people living with cardiovascular diseases (CVD) in low and middle-income countries are unable to access basic medications to manage their serious diseases. As a result, many parents are unable to provide lifesaving treatments for their children. Imagine being the parent of a child suffering from rheumatic fever who knows that by receiving benzathine penicillin G (BPG), a cheap drug to produce, you could stop the progression to rheumatic heart disease (RHD). If this child does not receive the required treatment they may suffer from destruction of the heart valves, heart failure and even death from this serious, preventable disease. Why is it that we are still living in a world where RHD has been eradicated in rich countries and it is still rampant in so many low and middle-income countries?

Fortunately, we have solutions to increase access to affordable medicines, such as BPG, which can help save countless lives around the world. In order to fully implement SDG 3.8 on access to essential medicines, we call on Member States to prioritize the following actions, which are aligned with the WHO's Roadmap on Access to Medicines and Vaccines:

- Support access to BPG as part of country commitments to the Roadmap on Access to Meds & the RHD Resolution.
- Ensure sustainable supplies of affordable, accessible and quality medication for CVD;
- Support access to quality diagnostics to screen for and detect CVDs including RHD
- Advocate for the inclusion of essential cardiovascular medicines on WHO's Prequalification Program;
- Promote voluntary licensing for access to new cardiovascular medicines;
- Standardize competencies of and increasing transparency in national selection committees of essential medicines;
- Strengthen procurement models and supply chains with feedback from communities and patients;
- Ratify and implement legislation against substandard and falsified medicines;

We look forward to working with you in the implementing phase of the road map so as to ensure that all of the above becomes reality and that cost-effective health products are included in your country's essential medicines list.

Thank you