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April 18, 2005
Vol. 83, Iss. 16
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Volume 83, Number 16

p. 12

WORLD HEALTH

Drugs For The Poor

Plans aim to distribute low-cost medicines and spur research

[RICK MULLIN](#)

New industry and nonprofit organization initiatives to get low-cost medicines to poor countries emerged in the wake of World Health Day 2005 earlier this month.

[Sanofi-Aventis](#) has formed a malaria drug development agreement with the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative. The partners say the drug they are developing, a combination of artesunate and amodiaquine, will be easier to use and cheaper than other malaria therapies.

Expected to be available in 2006, the combination will be sold at cost--less than \$1.00, the partners say--to poor countries and to nongovernmental organizations.

Meanwhile, the foundation established by former president Bill Clinton last week announced a \$10 million program to deliver an antiretroviral treatment to children and the rural poor in more than 10 countries. [Cipla](#), which is an Indian generics producer, will supply the [Clinton Foundation](#) with a treatment for children at a discount of more than 50% compared with current prices.

The announcements follow the release of a plan by the [Center for Global Development \(CGD\)](#), a policy research group focused on poverty, to spur drug company R&D on diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. Under the plan, governments and other donors would agree in advance to buy new vaccines for these diseases for distribution in developing countries.

CGD says the plan builds on a proposal by Michael Kremer, a Harvard professor and CGD fellow, to use market incentives to speed the invention of vaccines and their delivery to developing nations. Such an approach underpins a proposal put forward by the U.K. for consideration at the July meeting of the G-8 group of high-income industrialized countries.

A CGD report estimates that companies need to see a market of \$3 billion before they have the incentive to develop a new medicine.

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Chemical & Engineering News
ISSN 0009-2347
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