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Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination signed a memorandum of understanding with a multinational healthcare company to help the poor gain access to treatment of chronic diseases.

As per the pact, Ministry and Novartis will partner in the delivery of a program called Novartis Access. This program will provide access to a basket of high-quality medicines in the public sector targeting four key non communicable diseases (NCDs) – cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, respiratory illnesses, and breast cancer. These diseases kill one-fifth of Pakistanis between the ages of 30 and 70 years every year.

In pilot phase, Novartis Access medicines will be available through selected empanelled hospitals of district Islamabad under the Prime Minister's National Health Program. The government is committed to making these not for sale drugs available free of charge to patients within the program. The aim is to extend the program to all districts of Prime Minister's National Health Program over time and work has already started in this regard.

Speaking on the ocassion, Saira Afzal Tarar, Minister for National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, said,"I am very pleased over the signing of this Memorandum of Understanding with Novartis. Pakistan is grievously affected by the growth of non-communicable diseases, and having access to high-quality treatment at low cost is a critical part of our work to lessen the impact of chronic disease in Pakistan. It is part of the Prime Minister's ambitious plans to make Pakistan a true welfare state."

The MoU was signed on behalf of Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination by Director Prime Minister's National Health Program Dr. Faisal Rifaq and CEO Novartis Shahab Rizvi.