

GHIT Fund in Japan invests ¥ 790 M for product development of Neglected Tropical Diseases

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New drug development for lymphatic filariasis and onchocerciasis



The Global Health Innovative Technology (GHIT) Fund in Japan has announced a total of approximately 790 million yen (\$5.3 million) to invest in product development for lymphatic filariasis and onchocerciasis, two neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

Lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis) and onchocerciasis (river blindness) are two neglected tropical diseases that are caused by parasitic worms. These diseases affect more than 86 million people globally. Existing drugs principally target the young worms and not the adult worms. This means that sustained and prolonged delivery with high treatment coverage to endemic communities is required to break the transmission cycle of the long-living adult worms.

Through an investment project by the GHIT Fund, which started in 2013, the project team (Eisai Co., Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, University of Liverpool, University Hospital of Bonn, University of Buea) has already demonstrated that adult worms can be killed by eliminating a symbiotic bacterium that they contain, called Wolbachia.

This time, approximately 790 million yen will be invested to continue the development of the new drug through a Phase II clinical trial to evaluate its efficacy in patients suffering from onchocerciasis.

As of November 11, there are 61 ongoing projects, including 28 discovery, 20 preclinical and 13 clinical trials in the GHIT portfolio. The total amount of investments since 2013 is 28.4 billion yen (\$191 million).