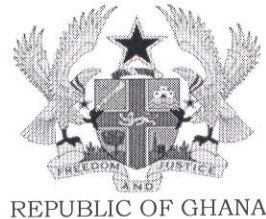


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MINISTRY OF HEALTH
P O BOX MB-44
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24th January, 2019.

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GOVERNMENT OF GHANA LAUNCHES FIRST OF ITS KIND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP WITH NOVARTIS TO IMPROVE DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF PEOPLE WITH SICKLE CELL DISEASE

- *Memorandum of Understanding signed between Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, Sickle Cell Foundation of Ghana and global medicines company Novartis*
- *Partnership to include the establishment of treatment guidelines, newborn screening, centres of excellence and the availability of accessible treatment options in line with the global standards of care*
- *15 000 babies are born with sickle cell disease every year in Ghana*

Davos, Switzerland, January 24, 2019. Today, at the at the World Economic Forum, The Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, the Sickle Cell Foundation of Ghana, and global medicines company Novartis, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), to create a holistic approach to help tackle the Sickle Cell disease.

This new public-private partnership (PPP) to improve the diagnosis and accelerate treatment for people with sickle cell disease (SCD), makes Ghana the first African country to be committed to offering the global standard of care for their people with SCD.

The partnership aims to improve and extend the lives of people with SCD through a comprehensive approach to screening and diagnosis; treatment and disease management; training and education; and elevating basic and clinical research

and capabilities. Specifically, the partners aim to collaborate on field testing and implementation of SCD treatment guidelines, the establishment of centres of excellence across regions and the implementation of newborn screening at these centres. The partners also plan to collaborate to improve access to high-quality treatment for patients in Ghana.

The Minister for Health, Hon. Kwaku Agyeman-Manu, who signed on behalf of the Government of Ghana, expressed his delight about the partnership with the Sickle Cell Foundation and Novartis, which is aimed at addressing the sickle cell disease in Ghana. He expressed the nation's commitment to putting SCD among the priorities on the national health agenda and to put the required resources behind it.

We invite like-minded partners from the public and private sectors to join us in this effort. Together, we can actively contribute to ending preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, as set out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals", he added.

Sickle cell disease is a hereditary and life-threatening condition that causes ongoing damage to red blood cells, blood vessels, and organs. It is a lifelong illness that can put an emotional, physical, and financial burden on patients and their families.

Sickle cell disease is recognized by the World Health Organization as a public health priority and a neglected health problem in sub-Saharan Africa. Approximately 80% of individuals with SCD globally are born in sub-Saharan Africa, and there is evidence to suggest that more than half of affected individuals may die before the age of five due to preventable complications. In Ghana, it is estimated that 15 000 babies are born with sickle cell disease every year.

In 2018, Novartis submitted hydroxyurea, the current general standard of care for severe SCD, for registration for the specific indication of SCD in Ghana. The

Ghana Food and Drugs Authority granted marketing authorization three months ahead of schedule (25 October 2018), making it the first time that hydroxyurea will be available to patients for this indication in Ghana. Discussions are underway for the inclusion of the medicine and associated laboratory testing in the National Health Insurance Scheme, as well as prioritizing this as a national program, with direct distribution through the Ministry of Health.



**NANA KWABENA ADJEI-MENSA
CHIEF DIRECTOR
FOR: MINISTER FOR HEALTH**