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PRESS RELEASE

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Polio Eradication Grant Given to Task Force for Global Health

New Funding supports work to identify polio antiviral drug

Atlanta, GA (September 3, 2010) [The Task Force for Global Health](http://www.taskforce.org), a non-profit global health organization based in Decatur, Georgia, received a two-year grant, totaling \$6.8M, from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#). This funding will support the continuation of the Polio Antivirals Initiative (PAI), a collaborative public/private effort being coordinated through the Task Force.

The PAI is an extension of the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative \(GPEI\)](#), a partnership led by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [Rotary International](#), the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), and the [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#). This grant builds upon the work accomplished under earlier grants to PAI by WHO and Rotary International through funds provided by the Foundation. The PAI was launched in 2007 to coordinate research and development of poliovirus antiviral drugs as supplemental tools for worldwide prevention and control of poliovirus incidents that may occur after polio eradication and oral polio vaccine cessation.

Participants in the Polio Antivirals Initiative include experts from CDC, the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Rotary International, and WHO. The PAI has engaged of several pharmaceutical companies as sponsors of candidate drugs.

Dr. Walter Dowdle directs the activities of the PAI for the Task Force. "As the Global Polio Eradication Initiative approaches its goal, the results of the PAI efforts will become relevant to maintaining a polio-free world", notes Dowdle.

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“It is critically important that we anticipate the need for a poliovirus antiviral drug now rather than wait for the need to arise in a post eradication environment,” commented Dr. John Modlin, Chairman of the PAI Steering Team.

In 2006, the National Research Council (NRC) of the (US) National Academies reviewed the post OPV risks and concluded “...it would be prudent to develop at least one, but preferably two, polio antiviral drugs as a supplement to the tools currently available for the control of poliomyelitis outbreaks in the post-eradication era”.

The PAI has been in the development stages over the past four years and drug testing in volunteers is expected to begin in this current phase of work.

About the Task Force for Global Health:

The Task Force for Global Health (The Task Force) is a not-for-profit, public health organization with a 25-year history of using collaboration to save and improve the lives of millions of people around the world. The Task Force works with partners across sectors, disciplines, and communities. The Task Force brings people together to improve the way health information is used and to apply resources efficiently to address global health challenges. The Task Force manages a breadth of global health initiatives related to neglected tropical diseases, immunizations, and increasing capacity for global health programs. (www.taskforce.org)

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