



For Immediate Release

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Global Health Leaders to Plan Response to Worsening Multidrug-Resistant TB Crisis

Heads of United Nations Agencies, World-Renowned Health Experts, Policymakers and Top Industry Figures to Convene in Seattle to Seek Solutions for Scale-Up of Global TB Control

Seattle, WA — Once a readily curable disease, tuberculosis (TB) has evolved and emerged into a global health threat. Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) are the result of public complacency, sub-standard treatment and weak health systems in the developed and developing world alike. XDR-TB, which is often fatal, has been reported in 55 countries and, like all forms of TB, is indifferent to international borders and economic status.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that TB affects 2 billion people worldwide and 500,000 new cases of MDR-TB emerge each year — 40,000 of which will become extensively drug-resistant (XDR-TB). In the United States, where it is often a common assumption that TB is a disease of the past, 12,898 new cases of TB were reported in 2008, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

On June 16-18, 2009, world leaders in global health, science, industry and policy will gather in Seattle to focus on “MDR-TB: Overcoming Global Resistance,” the theme of the 5th annual Pacific Health Summit. The event follows the arc of three important international health meetings addressing TB this year: the STOP TB Forum in Rio de Janeiro, a ministerial meeting of high M/XDR-TB burden countries in Beijing and the World Health Assembly in Geneva.

“We have a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on the momentum of these meetings in tandem with exciting prospects for new vaccine and drug treatment therapies,” said Michael Birt, executive director of the Pacific Health Summit.

Each year, the Pacific Health Summit concentrates on a significant global health challenge. “MDR-TB is rapidly undermining health development goals,” Birt added, “so we must act now and find working solutions to prevent a future epidemic of an untreatable disease.”

The Summit brings together leading figures in global health across all sectors including: Margaret Chan, Director-General, WHO; Paul Farmer, Founding Director, Partners In Health; Anthony Fauci, Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases; Chris Viehbacher, CEO, sanofi-aventis; John Dineen, President and CEO, GE Healthcare; Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and Ann Veneman, Executive Director, UNICEF.

The Pacific Health Summit is inviting media to attend — pre-registration is required. For more information, contact Jacqueline Koch, 360-556-1194, jkoch@nbr.org or Dean Forbes, 206.667.2896, dforbes@fhcrc.org. Details on the Summit and its history are available at: www.pacifichealthsummit.org/about/schedule.

About the Pacific Health Summit

The Pacific Health Summit launched in 2005 to connect science and policy for a healthier world and, now in its fifth year, has become widely recognized as an important event on the global health calendar. The invitation-only Pacific Health Summit brings together a broad spectrum of stakeholders necessary for an effective response to key health issues, a unique model where agendas are set aside for the global greater good. Each year, the Summit focuses discussions on an issue of critical importance; in 2008, the Summit addressed the challenge of global nutrition, and in 2007 the theme was pandemic influenza. The Pacific Health Summit is co-presented by the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust, and The National Bureau of Asian Research, which serves as the Summit Secretariat. The Russell Family Foundation is the founding organization for the Summit. For more information, please visit www.pacifichealthsummit.org.

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