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COVID Collaborative

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What is COVID Treatment Quick Start?

The COVID Treatment Quick Start Consortium brings together Duke University, the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), COVID Collaborative, and AmeriCares as implementing partners, with support from the Open Society Foundations, Pfizer and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The consortium will support governments to introduce and scale up access to new and effective COVID-19 oral antiviral therapies in high-risk populations. Partner countries include Ghana, Kenya, Laos, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The project will kick-start programs through a donation by Pfizer of 100,000 courses of PAXLOVID™ (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir), for which the World Health Organization (WHO) has issued a strong recommendation for use in high-risk individuals with mild to moderate COVID-19, administered within five days of symptom onset. These test-and-treat programs will shift to using quality assured, low-cost generics when they become available to facilitate wider adoption throughout countries.

Why is COVID Treatment Quick Start needed?

The COVID-19 virus has remained a Public Health Emergency of International Concern since January 20, 2020. Over the past two and a half years, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed significant global inequities in access to therapeutics, vaccines, testing, and other medical interventions that could limit the range and impact of the disease. Access to treatment has become an urgent need to tackle alongside persistently low primary vaccination and booster rates in many countries. New antiviral medicines such as PAXLOVID™ and molnupiravir have been available in high-income countries since late 2021 but are not yet widely available in low- and middle-income countries. In addition, scale-up of self-testing for COVID-19 in these settings will enable even more effective approaches.

Partners involved in the COVID Treatment Quick Start Consortium are committed to ensuring a more equitable scale-up of test-and-treat programs with antiviral medicines in low- and middle-income countries, to help address some of the challenges faced in the global scale up of vaccines.

How will COVID Treatment Quick Start work?

Over the next 18 months, the Quick Start Consortium will catalyze implementation of test-and-treat programs and operational research in partner countries. Specific goals of the consortium are to:

1. Work with Ministries of Health to rapidly introduce and scale access to COVID-19 oral antiviral therapy in vulnerable and high-risk populations presenting with mild to moderate symptoms within 5 days of symptom onset through a public health test and treat model;
2. Establish a learning network across countries and implementation sites, developing and disseminating best practices to catalyze and inform additional low- and middle-income country programs and scale-up; and
3. Build sustainable, well-financed COVID-19 outpatient test-and-treat programs that are widely available to appropriate populations, with stable access to low-cost, quality-assured generic equivalents.

The consortium expects that treatment will begin reaching patients in select partner countries as early as September.