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COVID Collaborative

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Zambia Becomes First Country to Receive PAXLOVID™ through COVID Treatment Quick Start Consortium

Quick Start Consortium supports Zambia to bring COVID-19 treatment to high-risk patients in a region where access to COVID drug innovations remains limited

Lusaka, Zambia/Washington, DC (22 December 2022) – The COVID Treatment Quick Start Consortium announced today that the government of Zambia has received its first shipment of PAXLOVID™ (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir), a COVID-19 oral antiviral. 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 supports governments to introduce and scale up access to new and effective COVID-19 oral antiviral therapies in high-risk populations.

Zambia is the first country to receive the treatment through the consortium. PAXLOVID™ has been available in many high-income countries since late 2021 but is still largely unavailable in low- and lower-middle income countries around the world. Zambia has received an initial shipment of 1,000 courses of PAXLOVID™ as part of a donation by Pfizer of 100,000 total courses to the Quick Start Consortium. These treatments will be available to patients in Zambia in the coming weeks.

The Ministry of Health is already working with the Quick Start Consortium and other partners to set the stage for introduction and scale up, with the ultimate goal of establishing a sustainable program providing access to low-cost generic antivirals. Partners involved in the 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.

“Zambia is excited to receive the first Quick Start shipment of donated PAXLOVID™ to treat vulnerable population and prevent hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19. Through our collaboration with the Quick Start consortium, we have been preparing to initiate the COVID-19 “test and treat” initiative for the high-risk population. We recognize how critical access to oral antivirals is to saving lives,” said Prof. Lloyd Mulenga, Director – Infectious Diseases at Zambia Ministry of Health. “In addition to vaccination and other measures, access to oral antivirals is critically important to save lives, protect health systems during future surges, and manage COVID-19 over the coming months and years. We must have more equitable access to all interventions, and our collaboration with the Quick Start Consortium is helping us make progress toward that goal.”

“Equitable access to oral treatments in Zambia will help to reduce progression to severe COVID-19 disease and hospitalizations and, ultimately, it will save lives,” said AmeriCare’s Deputy Senior Vice President of Global Programs Joan Littlefield.

“We are proud to support Zambia and other countries to launch and scale-up access to safe and effective COVID-19 treatments,” said Dr. Krishna Udayakumar, founding Director of the Global Health Innovation Center and implementing partner of Quick Start. “Through our direct efforts in 10 countries, as well as through a learning network that engages others around the world, we aim to urgently strengthen the response to the current pandemic while also building more robust and resilient health systems that are better prepared for future threats.”

In addition to Zambia, Quick Start partner countries include Ghana, Kenya, Laos, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. PAXLOVID™ donations to these countries are in progress.

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About the COVID Treatment Quick Start Consortium

The COVID Treatment Quick Start Consortium brings together Duke University, the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), COVID Collaborative, and AmeriCare as implementing partners, with support from the Open Society Foundations, Pfizer and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The consortium will work with national governments, multilateral agencies, and bilateral donors with a goal of supporting COVID-19 test-and-treat demonstration programs in 10 low- and middle-income countries.

<https://dukeghic.org/our-work/quick-start/>