Medicines Patent Pool to Expand Global Hepatitis C Treatment

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Treatment activists at the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) are considering plans to help speed up and expand treatment access for hepatitis C virus (HCV) in the world's lower- and middle-income countries, according to an announcement made at the first annual World Hepatitis Summit in Glasgow, Scotland, and reported by aidsmap.

Since its launch in 2010, the MPP has negotiated voluntary license agreements with nearly all the major pharmaceutical companies that produce antiretrovirals to treat HIV, allowing the expensive meds to be copied by generic producers and sold at drastically reduced prices in developing countries.

The international organization, which was established with the support of UNITAID (an international drug purchase fund for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria treatments), is now considering whether it can make a similar difference in the field of viral hepatitis.

According to Greg Perry, executive director of the MPP, the group's first priority would be to negotiate generic agreements for new pan-genotypic drug combos—treatments that are equally effective against all genotypes of hep C—such as Bristol-Myers Squibb's Daklinza (daclatasvir).

So far, the only existing voluntary license agreements for HCV drugs in the world cover Gilead Sciences' Sovaldi (sofosbuvir) and Harvoni (ledipasvir/sofosbuvir). Those drugs are highly effective for folks with genotype 1 of the virus, but don't work so well for genotype 3, which is more common in the developing world.

Approximately 85 percent of people with hep C live in low- or middle-income nations.

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