



Momentum builds in effort to save millions of children from pneumonia

Citing urgency, a diverse alliance unites to prevent the leading killer of children worldwide

BALTIMORE, MD. (July 16, 2009) – Representatives from major health and humanitarian relief organizations are coming together to coordinate outreach efforts for the first-ever World Pneumonia Day on November 2, 2009. The growing coalition, which now encompasses civil society organizations and faith-based groups, is mobilizing a diverse constituency around pneumonia.

More than 2 million children die from pneumonia each year, accounting for more than one in five of the 9 million under-5 deaths worldwide. Yet despite its overwhelming death toll, pneumonia is underfunded and rarely mentioned in the news media.

Coalition members are planning pneumonia summits around the world and hope to focus governments, donors and the media on pneumonia, the disease UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) recently dubbed ‘the forgotten killer of children.’ Through the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia (GAPP), academics, UNICEF and the WHO have reached technical consensus about the tools needed to prevent millions of children from dying of pneumonia every year.

A Growing Coalition Dedicated to Action

Save the Children, PneumoADIP at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the GAVI Alliance, and Hedge Funds vs. Malaria & Pneumonia united in April to announce the first annual World Pneumonia Day. By the July 1 meeting, the coalition had grown from four organizations to fifteen. Groups in attendance included the Sabin Institute, The Pneumococcal Awareness Council of Experts (PACE), The Best Shot Foundation, The International Rescue Committee (IRC), Episcopal Relief & Development, The New York University Global Public Health Program, and an envoy of the Central African Republic. The United Nation’s Children Fund (UNICEF) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided technical assistance and advice. The coalition also includes the Immunization Action Coalition and Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases.

Join the Fight

- Register your organization as a partner at <http://www.WorldPneumoniaDay.org>
- Log on to <http://www.WorldPneumoniaDay.org> to sign up to receive email updates about World Pneumonia Day

- Learn more about what causes pneumonia and how we can fight back.
- Join the movement on Facebook at <http://tinyurl.com/WorldPneumoniaDay>

Background on Childhood Pneumonia

Research shows that a package of proven, low-cost health measures provided globally, especially to the poorest communities, could dramatically cut childhood deaths from pneumonia. For each child who dies from pneumonia in an industrialized country, 2000 children die from pneumonia in developing countries.

Child health experts recommend a multipronged strategy of Protection, Prevention and Treatment. Children must be protected by getting adequate nutrition and exclusive breastfeeding, and illness can be prevented with vaccines. Pertussis (whooping cough) and measles vaccines have been available for decades. Vaccines against two of pneumonia's common bacterial causes, Hib (*Haemophilus influenzae* type b) and pneumococcus, have prevented many deaths in industrialized countries but are not yet available in most of the developing world.

For children who fall sick, it's essential to quickly diagnose and treat them. Few caregivers know the danger signs of pneumonia, such as fast or difficult breathing. Less than 20% of children with pneumonia receive antibiotics, like co-trimoxazole and amoxicillin, which cost less than \$1.

Fighting pneumonia is a critical strategy for countries working to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, which include a goal to reduce under-5 child deaths by 2/3.

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