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Frequently Asked Questions The Access To Essential Medicines EXPO

... Every minute, two children die from malaria - a preventable and treatable disease...

... The most effective treatment for sleeping sickness was out of production until 2001, forcing doctors to treat patients with melarsoprol, an arsenic-based medicine that kills one in 20 patients...

... Less than 0.1% of people with AIDS in Africa have access to treatment - even though effective treatments exist...

...One-third of the world's population is infected with tuberculosis - yet no new medicines have been developed in 30 years.

What is the Access EXPO?

The Access to Essential Medicines EXPO is an interactive, mobile exhibit housed in a remodeled 48-foot tractor-trailer. In 2002, it will travel to 30 cities across the United States to highlight the dearth of effective and affordable medicines for people in developing countries who suffer from communicable diseases. Millions of people die each year from diseases for which medicines are too expensive, no longer effective, or out of production.

Staffed by experienced Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) aid workers, the Access EXPO uses photographs, audiovisuals, and personal testimonies to convey the experience of those who suffer from the five diseases highlighted in the exhibit: malaria, tuberculosis, sleeping sickness, kala azar, and HIV/AIDS.

The goal of the tour is to raise awareness about the lack of research and development (R&D) for new medicines for neglected diseases and to encourage support for greater access to essential medicines for people in developing countries.

What Does MSF Hope to Accomplish with this Exhibit?

By raising awareness about the devastating lack of access to essential medicines in developing countries, MSF hopes to mobilize support in order to find solutions that ensure access to effective, affordable treatments for people with communicable diseases in poor countries.

From South Africa to Kenya, from Thailand to El Salvador, activists for access to medicines have shown that concerted, unified pressure on governments and pharmaceutical companies can change policies that have negative effects on public health. The Access EXPO is designed to help people living in the U.S. support these grassroots efforts around the world – and to give voice to the plight of populations affected by diseases that many people in the U.S. don't even know exist.

What is the Campaign for Access to Essential Medicines?

Launched in 1999, MSF's Access to Essential Medicines Campaign grew out of the frustration of MSF doctors and nurses who were increasingly unable to treat their patients because the medicines they needed were ineffective, unaffordable, or didn't exist. The Campaign is pushing to lower the prices of existing medicines, to bring abandoned drugs back into production, and to stimulate research and development of new treatments for diseases that primarily affect the world's poor.

Why Did MSF Create the Access EXPO?

MSF created the Access EXPO to raise awareness about the lack of affordable and effective medicines for life-threatening diseases in the developing world. Increasingly, our medical teams working in field projects around the world are finding fewer and fewer effective treatment options for their patients. Too often, the medicines needed are too expensive, highly toxic, or ineffective due to the emergence of resistance. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 14 million people die from infectious and parasitic diseases every year. More than 90% of the victims live in developing countries.

Why is MSF Bringing the Access EXPO to the United States?

Launched in Europe in 2001, MSF's Access EXPO is coming to the U.S. to invite visitors to take part in a growing movement of concerned people from around the world who are calling for solutions to the access to medicines crisis occurring in developing countries. MSF felt it was especially important to bring the Access EXPO to the U.S. because the vast majority of worldwide health research and development takes place in public research institutes, academic institutions, and pharmaceutical companies based in the U.S.

Currently these resources, particularly the pharmaceutical industry's drug development expertise, are focused almost exclusively on drugs for profitable Western markets, while little is being done to find treatments for diseases that affect the poor in developing countries. In fact, only 10% of global health research is devoted to conditions that account for 90% of global disease burden – something referred to as the "10/90 disequilibrium." Of the 1,393 new chemical entities developed worldwide between 1975 and 1999, only 13 (less than 1%) were for communicable diseases.

What is Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)?

Doctors Without Borders /Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is an international, humanitarian aid organization that delivers emergency medical aid to victims of armed conflict, epidemics, natural and man-made disasters, and to others who lack health care due to social or geographic isolation. Each year, more than 2,500 MSF volunteer doctors, nurses, other medical professionals, logistics experts, water/sanitation engineers, and administrators join more than 15,000 locally-hired staff to provide medical aid in more than 85 countries. MSF received the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize.

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