

GHIT-Funded New Drug Development

Peter J. Hotez

Professor, Baylor College of Medicine / Founding Dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine

Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) that I have been researching are seventeen diseases that are mainly prevalent among the poor. It is estimated that over one billion people worldwide have these diseases. As the name suggests, however, the world has paid little attention to these diseases and failed to take sufficient measures. The biggest problem with NTDs is that they result from poverty including a poor hygienic environment and can also cause poverty itself at the same time. When the diseases spread to the productive-age group, the national labor force declines and rising out of poverty becomes much harder.



I have been interested in studying these tropical diseases since I was twelve because of my dream to become a scientist and my desire to help those who suffer. After graduating from Yale University, I got my Ph.D. at Rockefeller University and my M.D. at Weill Cornell Medical College. As a researcher, I have been studying and developing remedies and vaccines for NTDs. Thanks to support from the European Union (EU), I have achieved several successes such as the world's first-ever development of a vaccine for hookworm disease prevalent in Asian and African tropical regions. However, many other tropical diseases without effective vaccines still remain. Now I am deeply committed to the study of Chagas' disease, one such disease.

There are two approaches for addressing NTDs: a short-term approach of providing mass treatment and R&D, which is important as a long-term approach. I have high expectations for the roles the Global Health Innovative Technology Fund (GHIT Fund) will play in this R&D area. The GHIT Fund, which is jointly sponsored by the Japanese government, Japanese pharmaceutical companies and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is Japan's first public-private partnership in the global health area that invests in developing new drugs for NTDs and other infectious diseases. This system is particularly significant for measures against NTDs whose infection is concentrated among the poor. The system

drastically reduces development periods and costs through close and active cooperation among pharmaceutical companies, universities and research institutes compared to when pharmaceutical companies single-handedly conduct R&D. JICA with its network with many countries will also play an ever-more-important role in promoting public-private partnerships.

To inform more people about these tropical diseases, I wrote a book about NTDs two years ago. This year, the Japanese version has been published, which I am very happy with. Japan, which has sophisticated technologies and excellent findings in medical research, can be a leader in next-generation R&D through the GHIT fund.

JICA^{WORLD}
is published by JICA

Publisher:
Masahiko Tanaka
Office of Media and
Public Relations

Nibancho Center Bldg
5-25, Niban-cho
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 102-8012 JAPAN

Tel: +81-3-5226-6660
Fax: +81-3-5226-6396
www.jica.go.jp/english/

Cover: A medical staff member cleans the body of a girl with Ebola at a medical facility in Liberia. ©John Moore/Getty Images

Photo on pages 2-3: A Ghanaian staff member studies a tropical disease at Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research in Ghana



The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is the world's largest bilateral development organization, operating in some 150 countries to help some of the globe's Most vulnerable people.