

January 22, 2010

Ms. Jayne Thomisee
The White House Office of Public Engagement
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Ms. Thomisee:

As a coalition of nonprofit organizations working to accelerate the development of health technologies for the developing world, the Global Health Technologies Coalition applauds the Obama Administration for its strong leadership in promoting global health and research and development (R&D). As you and your colleagues work to finalize your recommendations for the Presidential Study Directive on Global Development Policy, we urge you to remember the important role that global health R&D plays in furthering US development goals.

The United States has long been a leader in advancing science and innovation for the benefit of others and has played a critical role in ensuring that health technologies—such as vaccines to prevent childhood diseases and drugs to treat HIV/AIDS infection—reach those in need. However, providing existing prevention and treatment tools is only one part of the battle against pneumonia, diarrheal diseases, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), malaria, and neglected tropical diseases. To ensure that we are winning the fight against these global diseases, the United States must also continue to invest robustly in R&D for new global health technologies such as vaccines, drugs, microbicides, diagnostics, and devices.

In order to achieve the greatest results through innovation and R&D, we recommend that the Administration aspire to the following:

The US must prioritize R&D for new tools to combat diseases in order to ensure the most effective response to the health needs of the developing world.

While we must increase access to existing drugs, vaccines, tests, and other health tools to tackle global health problems, it is just as critical to develop the next generation of tools to stamp out disease and address emerging threats. Consider that:

- Anti-malarial drug distribution has increased substantially in recent years, but drug resistance is now prevalent around the world.
- Treatment is now reaching 3 million people living with HIV/AIDS, but for every two people put on treatment, another five become newly infected with HIV. A safe, effective, and globally accessible AIDS vaccine remains the best hope to control, and ultimately end the pandemic.
- Through a proven, cost-effective treatment, millions have been cured from TB, yet TB continues to kill almost 2 million people each year, and drug-resistant TB cases are rising worldwide. The current vaccine in use is almost 100 years old and TB drugs are 50 years old.
- Each year, over one billion people around the world are affected by neglected tropical diseases, including the more than 8 million people who contract Chagas disease annually. Access to treatment is extremely limited, and existing treatment is antiquated and accompanied by severe side effects.
- Deaths of children under five from diarrheal disease have declined by nearly half since the 1980s thanks in large part to global health successes like oral rehydration therapy, but 31,000 deaths every week from diarrhea is still too many.

The United States contributes to different phases in the development of new global health technologies for the developing world through a variety of US agencies, including the National Institutes of Health,

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Defense, US Agency for International Development, and Food and Drug Administration. Each of these agencies brings complementary strengths and expertise to international health research endeavors. The critical work of these agencies merits long-term, robust funding that is in addition to existing global health funding levels.

To maximize the impact of its investments, the US government should enhance its tracking and coordination of R&D funds for global health across the various government agencies.

Although significant global health R&D is being conducted by US agencies, the categorization and reporting of this work, as well as tracking of the products in the pipeline for disease products, varies from one agency to the next. This results in potential gaps that could lead to significant delays in the development of new life-saving tools. The US government must ensure a more coordinated approach in order to gain a full picture of existing and future US agency initiatives and investments in global health R&D. With a better understanding of which US federal agencies invest in global health R&D, what amounts these agencies contribute, and which types of research activities they support, resources can be used to inform a more efficient approach to advancing innovation to improve health around the world.

A strengthened dedication to global health research will contribute to health gains across the world and will help to maintain the role of the United States as a consistent leader in global health science and technology. We look forward to your leadership in advancing international health through research and we stand ready to assist you in any way possible. Please do not hesitate to contact Kaitlin Christenson, our coalition manager, at kchristenson@path.org or 202-822-0033, with any questions or for further information about this request.

Sincerely,

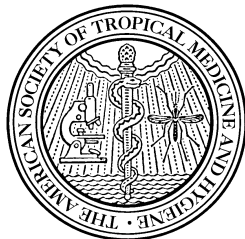
Aeras Global TB Vaccine Foundation



AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition



American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene



BIO Ventures for Global Health



Drugs for Neglected Disease *initiative*



Elizabeth Glazer Pediatric AIDS Foundation



Global Alliance for TB Drug Development



Global Campaign for Microbicides



Infectious Disease Research Institute



Institute for OneWorld Health



International AIDS Vaccine Initiative



PATH



Pediatric Dengue Vaccine Initiative



Research!America

