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World Health Organization
CH-1211 Geneva 27

Geneva, 11th October 2006


(Section 6.5.5.1, 14th WHO MEML)

Dear Dr Hill,

We are writing to ask the 15th Expert Committee on the Selection and Use of Essential Medicines to consider the inclusion of eflornithine injection, and pentamidine powder for injection in the WHO MEML main list for the treatment of Human African Trypanosomiasis (HAT).

The list in its current form only includes melarsoprol injection and suramin sodium powder for injection in the main list, relegating eflornithine injection, and pentamidine powder for injection to the complementary list.

As you know, HAT takes two forms, depending on the parasite involved:
*Trypanosoma brucei gambiense* (T.b.g.), is found in West and Central Africa. This form represents, according to WHO, more than 90% of the reported cases of sleeping sickness and causes a chronic infection.
*Trypanosoma brucei rhodesiense* (T.b.r.), is found in Eastern and Southern Africa. This form represents, according to WHO, fewer than 10% of the reported cases and causes an acute infection.

**For the first stage** of the disease, pentamidine can be used for *T.b. gambiense* infections, and suramin may be used only for *T.b. rhodesiense* infections.

Depending on the geographical distribution of the parasite, both medicines are needed and as such should be included in the WHO MEML.
For the second stage of the disease, melarsoprol may be used in both forms of the infection, although an increase of resistance to the drug has been observed in several foci particularly in Central Africa. Eflornithine is effective against *T. b. gambiense* and used as a first-line treatment in many settings (1).

We believe hence, that both should be equally considered in the WHO M EML, as this would have important implications for their accessibility and use.

The relevant disease department at WHO and the Focal Point person (Dr Pere Simarro) supports this modification that will be in alignment with current WHO treatment recommendations. Please, do refer to them for any further explanations the Expert Committee might require.

Yours faithfully,

Carmen Pérez Casas
Access to Essential Medicines Campaign
Médecins Sans Frontières

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1 *Bulletin of the World Health Organization, October 2006, 84 (10), 783-791*