

Closing the Gaps in Global Health Care

Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhuman.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Over 65 years ago, the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights was approved by the UN's member states. The declaration articulated 30 principles that would become internationally accepted conventions to uphold human dignity, freedom, justice and equality. Among these conventions is article #25 which declares that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of him/herself and of his/her family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.” This declaration, along with the respective teachings of the world's faith traditions to care for the most vulnerable among us, has provided the foundation for more than 20 years of ICCR advocacy on expanding access to global health care. ICCR members – many with overseas missions – work with members of the health care sector to promote the equitable access to and affordability of life-saving medicines in emerging markets. One of the challenges they face is the current business model of the pharmaceutical industry which is focused on the development and marketing of highly profitable drugs for affluent markets at the expense of the sick and poor living in undeveloped nations.

Donna Meyer of Mercy Investment Services spoke about the implications of the current business model for people living in

Health is not a luxury, nor should it be the sole possession of a privileged few. We are all created b'tzelem elohim — in the image of God — and this makes each human life as precious as the next.

—Rabbi Alexander Schindler, Past President, Union of American Hebrew Congregations

low income countries: “The donation of drugs and other philanthropic efforts, while commendable, aren't sustainable solutions to getting medicines to low income markets where they are desperately needed. The traditional model of higher price points in developed markets to cover R&D costs and allowing for lower price points in lesser developed markets may not provide the competition needed to significantly lower costs. These models aren't effective and sustainable. Drug companies need to be more creative in order to genuinely promote access and affordability and to be more flexible in their responses to the many changes in the health care environment.”

Said David Schilling, Senior ICCR Program Director, “These outdated business models have led to enormous gaps in the global health care system, particularly in research for medicines to treat neglected tropical diseases and tuberculosis that overwhelmingly affect poor people living in less developed countries. We are encouraging the pharmaceutical companies we work with to continue to innovate in this area of unmet need.”

The health of a society is truly measured by the quality of its concern and care for the health of its members...We believe that health is a fundamental human right which has as its prerequisites social justice and equality and that it should be equally available and accessible to all.

—Imam Sa'dullah Khan, The Islamic Center of Southern California

Our current global health work has two main thrusts: non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and HIV/AIDS. NCDs, including heart disease, strokes, and cancer, are the leading cause of death in the world, killing more than 36 million people each year. Similarly, an estimated 34 million people are currently living with HIV. In the face of these enormous global health challenges, the pharmaceutical industry has a responsibility to respond with new mechanisms, structures and strategies to help answer the need and close the gaps.

To this end, in March of 2014, ICCR's Working Group on Global Health released its Statement of Principles and Recommended Corporate Practices to Promote Global Health. The white paper sets out ICCR's roadmap for expanding access to health care around the globe. To date, the six principles and accompanying best practices have been endorsed by over 80 institutional investors, including health care systems, asset management companies, foundations, insurance companies, and religious congregations.



Said Julie Tanner of Christian Brothers Investment Services, “We are very encouraged by the strong positive response the principles have received from both our allies working on global health concerns and the companies we have been engaging. Over the next few years, we will be partnering with the drug companies we hold to help them identify ways to fully implement our recommended practices, to ensure that global health needs are addressed in ways that are equitable, accessible, affordable and sustainable.”

An example of creativity and innovation in global health is in the sharing or “pooling” of patents which allows for easier generic production of these life-saving drugs. Formed in 2010 through funding from UNITAID, the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) is a unique collaboration that encourages the sharing of HIV/AIDS patents by major pharmaceutical companies in order to facilitate their manufacture by generics companies. It is a powerful example of a social innovation with the potential for profound global health impact. The MPP has been endorsed by the World Health Organization, the UN High Level Meeting on AIDS, and the Group of 8 as a promising approach to improving access to HIV medicines.

In ICCR-convened industry roundtables, in regular face-to-face corporate dialogues and through shareholder resolutions, ICCR members are urging big pharmaceutical companies to share their patents via the MPP. While progress has been slower than hoped, it is gradually being made. The most

recent breakthrough came in April of this year when ViiV agreed to contribute the license for its adult and pediatric HIV drug, dolutegravir, to the MPP, a decision which

will help improve the lives of millions of people currently living with the virus.

“We aren’t confronted with the inequities of the current system on a regular basis because they occur in communities far from home and, for this reason we often don’t feel the same urgency,” said Anna Falkenberg of the Socially Responsible Investment Coalition. “But when we internalize the principles articulated by the UN Declaration 65 years ago of providing access to health to everyone as a basic human right, we are compelled to act. We cannot continue to let people fall through the cracks in the global health care system.”

ICCR’s Global Health Principles

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY: Global health business models must promote access to health for all, and be equitable and affordable, regardless of one’s country or resources.

INNOVATIVE RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT MODELS: Companies must develop new models that address critical global health needs, including non-communicable diseases, HIV/TB/malaria and neglected tropical diseases that impact the most vulnerable.

ETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES: Companies must develop, implement, and monitor a global code of conduct that incorporates responsible marketing practices; anti-bribery corruption measures; fair clinical trials; and robust oversight of supply chain management programs.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT: Pharmaceutical companies working with communities, the private sector and other stakeholders must find solutions to overcome barriers to improving a country’s health system infrastructure and supply chain distribution.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION: Companies must increase collaboration within the pharmaceutical industry and with other stakeholders to share knowledge and resources to develop and implement access to health initiatives.

TRANSPARENCY & DISCLOSURE: Companies must increase transparency and disclosure on access strategies, health outcomes, public policy positions and lobbying activities in order to demonstrate responsible corporate citizenship and enable investors and other stakeholders to hold companies accountable.

** Note: for full list of Recommended Practices, please download the full publication from our website: <http://www.iccr.org/iccrs-statement-principles-and-recommended-corporate-practices-promote-global-health-0>*