

Our new compound TMC207 will be the solution for MDR-TB'

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Tibotec is an international pharmaceutical company, accelerating discovery and development of breakthrough drugs in HIV/AIDS and other therapeutic diseases. Dr Koen Andries, distinguished research fellow at Tibotec tells about the firm's strategy for restricting TB menace.

What are the factors that led Tibotec to shift its focus to tuberculosis?

Tibotec recognizes the tremendous medical demand for new anti-TB compounds, both in the area of drug sensitive and in the area of multi-drug-resistant (MDR) TB. Tibotec is an innovator in life-saving anti-infectives. TB is a growing problem (9 million cases per year), which is having a serious impact on global poverty and suffering.

Over 511,000 cases of MDR TB are estimated to have occurred in 2007, resulting in an estimated global prevalence ranging from 8,50,000 to 1,300,000 cases. Three countries, China, India and the Russian Federation, accounted for 62 percent of the estimated global burden. Tibotec has a number of anti-HIV compounds in development. The global pandemics of HIV/AIDS and TB are closely linked.

What are the factors that encourage Tibotec's efforts in eradicating TB?

Tibotec plays a key role in addressing the global TB pandemic. Corporations, governments and international, national and local aid organizations must all play a part in seeking solutions to TB and other global epidemics. Through a collaboration with the Global TB Alliance, we share expertise and resources to expedite development of TMC207 (bedaquiline) for the treatment of tuberculosis.

What are the concerns that are associated with finding remedy for TB?

MDR-TB is a growing global health threat characterized by resistance to the two most powerful drugs in today's standard, four-drug regimen for drug-susceptible TB. There are nearly half a million new cases of MDR-TB worldwide each year, according to the WHO. However, only 30,000 MDR-TB patients receive treatments each year.

Treatment of MDR TB requires regular administration of second line drugs for up to two years - a severe burden on both patients and healthcare systems in the low-income areas where TB is most prevalent. There are only a limited number of hospitals that can provide the care needed for MDR TB patients, who require hospitalization. Better treatment options for MDR TB are urgently needed.

Which are the new TB-related projects in the pipeline?

Tibotec is committed to fighting TB and has a discovery research program with the Global TB Alliance to identify new compounds for the treatment of TB. A new compound TMC207 is in phase II clinical trials in patients with multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR TB) in combination with other second line TB drugs.

Our goal is to accelerate development and approval of TMC207 as part of a new regimen for the treatment of MDR TB. Recognizing that new, faster and better TB drugs will only be effective if they are affordable and available, Tibotec and its future partners will work with global, regional, and national stakeholders to ensure regulatory approval, adoption by TB programs, and widespread availability of new drug regimens.