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Singapore: Geneva based Drugs for Neglected Diseases and Japan's Takeda have collaborated for a Lead Optimization Program aimed at identifying the best compound among aminopyrazole series for developing an innovative drug for the treatment of visceral leishmaniasis (VL).

Leishmaniasis is a parasite infection transmitted by sandflies, and there are more than 20 Leishmania species which are the pathogens causing the infection. Leishmaniasis occurs in over 90 countries worldwide, mainly in tropical regions, but treatment options are limited. Leishmaniasis is one of the 17 Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) designated by the World Health Organization (WHO). VL is the most serious form of Leishmaniasis causing fever, weight loss, spleen and liver enlargement, and anemia. If left untreated, it can cause death. Every year, 300,000 new cases of VL are confirmed, and 20,000 to 40,000 deaths are reported.

The program is being funded by Global Health Innovative Technology Fund, a public interest incorporated association and a fund for promoting the research and development of pharmaceuticals, vaccinations and the like which are needed in developing countries.

DNDi and Takeda are working on the lead optimization of the aminopyrazole series. In preclinical trials, the aminopyrazole series exhibited good antiparasitic activity, and are expected to be highly safe and effective. DNDi and Takeda consider that short-course oral administration of the drug is effective for the treatment, and therefore it is expected to be a novel drug which will be different from the existing therapeutics for VL.