

World Heart Day 2020: From our heart to yours

September 29 is World Heart Day. For the past six decades, Novartis has been working to advance heart health around the world.

Sep 29, 2020

For the past six decades, Novartis has been working to advance heart health around the world, from transforming the standard of care for cardiovascular conditions to strengthening healthcare systems in lower income communities.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a general term for conditions affecting the heart or blood vessels. Although average CVD mortality rates have fallen by 61% over the 50-year period since 1960¹, CVD remains the number one killer worldwide, causing one out of three deaths globally².

CVD has many causes: from smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, to air pollution, genetic risk factors and less common conditions such as Chagas disease. Further, in the time of COVID-19, patients with CVDs are more at risk of developing severe forms of the viral illness³.



Developing next-generation therapies

Novartis started helping people with CVDs over 60 years ago. Since then we have been committed to reimagining the standard of care for some of these progressive and potentially life-threatening cardiovascular conditions, and we remain steadfast in that commitment.

One of these conditions is atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD), which accounts for more than 85%⁴ of all CVD deaths and can lead to heart attacks and strokes. The main risk factor is elevated LDL-C (low-density lipoprotein cholesterol) – also called “bad cholesterol”. Statins are currently prescribed to 90% of ASCVD patients worldwide to lower LDL-C, but more than 70% of them are not at optimal LDL-C level, increasing their risk of cardiovascular events and death^{5, 6, 7}.

As part of our commitment to fight CVD we also focus on heart failure – a potentially life-threatening condition in which the heart cannot pump enough blood to meet the body’s needs. This leaves patients tired and short of breath, and at risk of hospitalization or sudden cardiac death.

At least 26 million people worldwide live with heart failure⁸ – a major burden that costs the global economy an estimated USD 108 billion every year in both direct and indirect costs⁹.

Assessing an innovative therapy for patients with Chagas cardiomyopathy

Chagas disease is one of the four Novartis Global Health Flagship Programs (in addition to leprosy, malaria and sickle cell disease). The disease affects approximately 6 million people¹⁰, mainly in Latin America. Less than 1% of affected individuals receive proper anti-parasitic treatment¹¹, and current drugs are inadequate to fight the entire spectrum of the disease.

During the chronic phase, when the disease evolves, it can affect key organs such as the heart, leading to cardiac disorders in up to 30% of patients. Chagas cardiomyopathy accounts for the majority of death and disability among individuals affected by the disease.

Against this background, Novartis is pursuing an end-to-end approach, with activity on three fronts: drug discovery, clinical research and healthcare system strengthening. Further, in 2019, we launched the **first clinical study in people with heart failure caused by Chagas disease** to assess an innovative therapy in this underserved patient population.

Chagas disease is both parasitic and chronic, and requires holistic care. Therefore, we are also working with health authorities and stakeholders across Latin America on healthcare system strengthening activities and new access models for innovative therapies to complement ongoing efforts to fight the disease.

Follow us on social media: **#NovartisGlobalHealth**

Read the photo story: Chagas disease: Breaking the silence

Learn more on how we are reimagining the fight against Chagas disease

Lowering healthcare costs and broadening access

The need to treat CVDs has been growing year on year, which places a significant burden on patients and healthcare systems. Our Generics Division Sandoz improves access to medicines for treatment of CVDs – covering all major CVD areas and helping millions of patients worldwide every year.

Additionally, the **Novartis Access portfolio** offers a basket of medicines to governments, NGOs and other institutional customers in lower-income countries at USD 1 per treatment per month, including medicines to treat CVDs.

Improving heart health in low-income urban populations

The Novartis Foundation is pioneering a population health response to CVDs.

Learn more on the Novartis Foundation work

Did you know?

- CVD is the no. 1 cause of death globally, killing 18 million people every year¹²
- Of these, 7.5 million CVD deaths result from complications due to hypertension¹³
- More than 75% of CVD deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries¹⁴
- When lost productivity is taken into account, CVD is estimated to cost the global economy USD 863 billion annually, mounting to over USD 1 trillion by 2030¹⁵

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