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**Novartis launches international education program to ensure effective treatment with its fixed dose combination anti-malarial drug product, consisting of artemether and lumefantrine (Coartem®)**

- *“Coartem and Malaria” initiative is latest step in the collaboration with WHO to provide this drug at cost to patients in developing countries*
- *Launch of program underlines Novartis' commitment to access to medicines for tropical diseases*

Basel, 25 April 2003 – Novartis announced today the introduction of its international malaria education program, “Coartem and Malaria”, developed in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) in support of the effort to Roll Back Malaria. This education program addresses a serious problem facing many malaria victims in developing countries: how to take their medicine correctly. Many patients in developing countries have difficulty reading conventional Western style packaging which tragically leads to the inappropriate use of anti-malarial drugs, poor cure rates and avoidable deaths.

The “Coartem and Malaria” education program supports Novartis’ novel product packaging, which has been specially designed to improve patient compliance in developing countries, optimizing drug response and cure rates. The innovative packaging incorporates a series of simple visual images that depict correct use of the six-dose regimen for infants, children and adults. Both the packaging and educational program have undergone intensive field testing.

“Coartem and Malaria” has been intensively tested and validated in the countries where it is most needed. The intention is to ensure effective treatment of one of the world's major killers,” said Dr. Daniel Vasella, CEO and Chairman of Novartis. “This important education initiative confirms Novartis' commitment to the concept of public/private partnerships, the cornerstone of the U.N. Global Compact. The program marks another milestone in Novartis' and RBM's shared goal of saving people, many of them children, from malaria and it underlines Novartis' commitment to access to medicine for tropical diseases,” Dr. Vasella concluded.

More than 300 million acute cases of malaria illness occur worldwide each year resulting in at least 1 million deaths.<sup>1</sup> The majority of victims are children and an estimated 90% of these deaths occur in Africa.<sup>1</sup> The availability of the fixed dose combination consisting of artemether and lumefantrine at cost to national governments and anti-malarial programs of non-governmental organizations -- with distribution through WHO -- represents an important contribution to the fight against one of the world's leading killers.

Coartem® is the first fixed-dose artemisinin-based combination malaria treatment available. Prior to the introduction of artemisinin combination therapy (ACT), inappropriate drug use in

developing countries had led to the emergence of drug-resistant parasites. In some regions malaria threatened to become untreatable. To date, no clinical resistance has been documented against artemisinins, further strengthening the argument for the artemether/lumefantrine combination which has demonstrated cure rates above 95% even in most areas of multi-drug resistance.<sup>2</sup>

By creating the education program, Novartis aims to further support a very effective and well tolerated anti-malarial treatment, making an important contribution to health and well-being in developing countries. The primary aim of the education program is to communicate the importance of closely adhering to the dosage recommendations. It comprises an easy to understand training manual, instruction cards and posters. These explain what malaria is and how it spreads -- and give an explicit graphic message about how Coartem should be taken to achieve optimum cure rates.

Validated and endorsed by operational field research, the education package is intended for use by paramedical staff and by authority figures in rural communities, such as school teachers, care-givers and village elders. Field research and development was carried out in cooperation with the UNDP -World Bank-WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases. Introduction will begin in countries that have adopted artemether/lumefantrine in their treatment policies. Further roll out will follow as more countries begin using Coartem in their public-sector health facilities.

Novartis has committed itself to the principles of the Global Compact and has already made significant contributions by providing Coartem at cost through WHO, by donating drugs to eliminate leprosy world-wide, and by establishing the Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases in Singapore, where research activities are expected to provide synergies with the Novartis Tropical Medicine product portfolio.

Novartis AG (NYSE: NVS) is a world leader in pharmaceuticals and consumer health. In 2002, the Group's businesses achieved sales of USD 20.9 billion and a net income of USD 4.7 billion. The Group invested approximately USD 2.8 billion in R&D. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Novartis Group companies employ about 77 200 people and operate in over 140 countries around the world. For further information please consult <http://www.novartis.com>.

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For further information about malaria, please visit – [www.malariaandhealth.com](http://www.malariaandhealth.com)

### **References**

1. Roll Back Malaria, "What is malaria", RBM Infosheet 1 of 11, March 2002.
2. van Vugt M et al. Artemether-lumefantrine for the treatment of multidrug-resistant falciparum malaria. Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (2000) 94: 545-548.