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**MALARIA EXPERTS CALL ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO INCREASE
SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

*ASTMH/PATH/Malaria No More Capitol Hill Briefing Highlights Recent Progress as well as
Need for Next Generation of Interventions*

WASHINGTON, DC, Nov. 18, 2009—While efforts to control and eliminate malaria have made great strides during the past five years, the looming specter of drug resistance heightens the importance of continued research and development for new tools to assure continued success, according to malaria scientists and public health experts appearing today on Capitol Hill. The briefing, sponsored by the American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH), PATH, and Malaria No More, was hosted in cooperation with Senators Sam Brownback (KS), Richard Durbin (IL), and Patty Murray (WA), and Congressman Adam Smith (WA). Experts from across the malaria community urged Congress to increase funding for malaria programs focused on developing new antimalarial medications and vaccines.

“Recent progress has emboldened the malaria community to speak of malaria elimination and eradication, and plans have been developed to make this long-term aspiration a reality,” commented Dr. Kent Campbell, director of PATH’s Malaria Control Program and chair of the ASTMH Advocacy and Policy Committee. “Eliminating malaria will take decades, and success will not be possible without consistent investment in the development of improved tools for controlling malaria. Drug and insecticide resistance is a reality; we need a vaccine that can block infection. If we do not invest in these programs to develop treatment and prevention, there will be devastating effects on the progress made thus far.”

Experts pointed out that drug treatment for malaria has historically involved identifying and developing new drugs that had multiple decades of effectiveness, only to witness resistance emerging over time. According to Dr. Alan Magill, director of Experimental Therapeutics at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and chair of Clinical Groups at ASTMH, “Today, the best drugs we have remaining to treat malaria are the artemisinin-containing combination regimens, which are saving lives every day. But recent reports from the Thai-Cambodian border show delayed parasite clearance with the artemisinins which may be the first sign of emerging

drug resistance.” Dr. Magill points out that resistance to artemisinins may be a result of illegal availability, sale, and use of artemisinin monotherapies, a practice that has been condemned by the World Health Organization, which calls for policies to eliminate the practice that threatens success in the war on malaria.

Hope on the Horizon

Experts at the Capitol Hill briefing called for further funding for research into vaccines that could ultimately block malaria infection. Currently, hope hangs on RTS,S, the world’s most clinically advanced malaria vaccine candidate which is now in Phase III testing. The trial will involve as many as 16,000 young children and infants and is underway at sites in seven African countries, including three sites in Kenya.

“This is the final stage of testing in Africa. If all goes well in this trial, RTS,S could be the first-ever malaria vaccine and could save hundreds of thousands of lives,” commented Dr. Patricia W. Njuguna, of the KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme in Kenya and a principal investigator in the trial. “As a pediatrician working near the coast of Kenya, where malaria still persists despite rollout of current prevention methods, I regularly see the tragedy of young children dying of the disease and the grief of parents who couldn’t protect them. My hope is that the international community will be ready to support the availability of this vaccine, if approved, so that the children in Kenya and other African countries will have access to it as soon as possible. There are lives to be saved.”

Dr. Tom Monath, a partner at the venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers who spent 25 years in public service, saluted the US government for being “a major source of support for malaria research efforts worldwide,” though he said increased funding is needed, particularly for vaccine development. “Vaccines are responsible for the prevention and control of at least 16 major diseases that were once scourges of humankind, including smallpox and polio,” Dr. Monath observed. “The costs associated with preventing communicable diseases by means of vaccinating populations are extraordinarily small compared to the gain achieved in health and freedom from the ravages of infectious diseases. Continued investment in innovative malaria vaccine research and development could bring both health and economic benefits to endemic regions.”

About the ASTMH

The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH), founded in 1903, is a worldwide organization of scientists, clinicians, and program professionals whose mission is to promote global health through the prevention and control of infectious and other diseases that disproportionately afflict the global poor.

About PATH

PATH is an international nonprofit organization that creates sustainable, culturally relevant solutions, enabling communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health. By collaborating with diverse public- and private-sector partners, PATH helps provide appropriate health technologies and vital strategies that change the way people think and act. PATH’s work improves global health and well-being. For more information, please visit www.path.org.

About Malaria No More

Malaria No More is determined to end malaria deaths. A nonprofit, nongovernmental organization, Malaria No More makes high-yield investments of time and capital to speed progress, unlock resources, mobilize new assets, and spur the world toward reaching this goal. Malaria No More runs the Malaria Policy Center in Washington, DC. The Policy Center works with the global health community to engage policy leaders in the United States and in the other donor nations to advance efforts to defeat malaria worldwide.

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