



News Release

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Merck & Co., Inc., Names MECTIZAN® Award Winner

University of Melbourne Professor Honored for Research on Prevention and Treatment of River Blindness

Geneva, Switzerland, May 3, 2007 –Merck & Co., Inc., based in Whitehouse Station, NJ, USA,* today awarded Professor Hugh Taylor of the University of Melbourne its annual Merck MECTIZAN Award. Established in 2002, the Merck MECTIZAN Award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the control of onchocerciasis, commonly known as river blindness, a treatable disease that affects millions in Latin America, Africa and Yemen.

Merck commended Professor Taylor for his notable contributions to MECTIZAN-based river blindness control over three decades, including his major role in field studies that not only proved the efficacy of MECTIZAN® (ivermectin) in controlling river blindness, but also determined the appropriate dosage and treatment schedule for the drug. He was also an early advocate for the development of local ownership of MECTIZAN distribution programs, which have evolved into today's successful Community Directed Treatment with Ivermectin Model. Professor Taylor is the Ringland Anderson Professor and head of the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Melbourne, and managing director of the Centre for Eye Research Australia.

“Professor Taylor’s dedication and commitment to research and blindness prevention is truly inspiring,” said Dr. Björn Thylefors, director of the MECTIZAN Donation Program (MDP). “Through his ground-breaking research we have been able to expand community-based treatment for river blindness, and have helped save the vision of thousands of people.”

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In 1987, Merck committed to donate MECTIZAN to all who need it for as long as necessary to combat river blindness. Now in its 20th year, the MDP has approved more than 530 million treatments to 34 countries in Africa, Latin America and Yemen and donated more than 1.8 billion MECTIZAN tablets, at a value of US \$2.7 billion. The program is the longest on-going disease-specific drug donation program and public-private partnership in history. Merck confers the Merck MECTIZAN Award at the national/international and local/community level to individuals whose contribution to the control of river blindness and the elimination of lymphatic filariasis deserves recognition and appreciation.

Brenda Colatrella, Executive Director of Global Health Partnerships at Merck, said, "Professor Taylor's leadership and research into the effects of MECTIZAN on river blindness transmission were critical in proving that MECTIZAN was a safe and effective treatment. Without his essential contribution, few would have predicted that community-based treatment with MECTIZAN could have been possible."

Professor Taylor will accept the award at the 37th MECTIZAN Expert Committee/Albendazole Coordination (MEC/AC) meeting on May 3, 2007, at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. For information about this event, as well as previous recipients of the Merck MECTIZAN award, please visit http://www.mectizan.org/award_winner.asp.

* Merck & Co., Inc., operates as Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) in many countries outside the United States.

Facts about River Blindness, MECTIZAN and Merck

Bites from blackflies carrying the microscopic worm *Onchocerca Volvulus* transmit the disease onchocerciasis. In some villages in endemic areas, a person may be bitten more than 10,000 times a day. The constant movement of the immature microscopic worms through a person's body causes intense itching, skin disfigurement, and, eventually, after migrating to the person's eyes, lesions that can lead to blindness. With just one annual dose, MECTIZAN paralyzes the microscopic worms, halting the symptoms of the disease and preventing blindness. Before an effective treatment was available, the fear of contracting river blindness forced entire communities to flee fertile plains near swift-flowing rivers where the blackflies flourish to less productive land.

It is estimated that up to 120 million people worldwide are at risk of contracting river blindness. Because of the successful distribution of MECTIZAN, combined with other river blindness-control initiatives, substantial progress has been made against one of the world's oldest and most debilitating scourges.

For more information, visit www.mectizan.com

About Merck & Co., Inc.

Merck & Co., Inc. is a global research-driven pharmaceutical company dedicated to putting patients first. Established in 1891, Merck currently discovers, develops, manufactures and markets vaccines and medicines to address unmet medical needs. The Company devotes extensive efforts to increase access to medicines through far-reaching programs that not only donate Merck medicines but help deliver them to the people who need them. Merck also publishes unbiased health information as a not-for-profit service. For more information, visit www.merck.com.

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