



News Release

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Merck and Partners Make Progress In Long-Term Commitment To End River Blindness

Public Health Officials Confirm Significant Progress Toward the Goal of Elimination of River Blindness in Latin America by 2012

WHITEHOUSE STATION, N.J., Nov. 11, 2010 – Public health officials at the 20th Inter-American Conference on Onchocerciasis in Antigua, Guatemala, confirmed that more than one-third of all Latin Americans who ran the risk of contracting river blindness (onchocerciasis), a leading cause of preventable blindness, are no longer at risk.

Officials attribute the successes in Latin America to a sustained public-private partnership led by the Carter Center that offers drug treatment and health education. The Carter Center – through its sponsorship of the Onchocerciasis Elimination Program of the Americas (OEPA) – assists national ministries of health in six affected countries in Latin America to conduct health education and distribute Merck's medicine, ivermectin (registered trademark MECTIZAN).

"Our continued progress toward eliminating river blindness is bringing improved health to hundreds of thousands of people in the Americas and the preservation of vision for future generations," said former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. "With continued focus, we can ensure that river blindness will no longer be a threat to people in the Western Hemisphere."

"Merck has donated MECTIZAN for more than 20 years and will continue to do so until river blindness becomes a disease of the past, vate

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) passed a historic resolution in 2008,

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