



UICC announces a new global coalition to increase access to and the use of essential cancer medicines in low- and lower middle-income countries

20 May 2022. Geneva, Switzerland. The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) and multiple partners* are establishing the **Access to Oncology Medicines (ATOM) Coalition**, a new global partnership to increase access to quality-assured essential cancer medicines in low- and lower middle-income countries (LLMICs) and to help countries develop the capacity for their proper use.

It is estimated that less than 50% of the cancer medicines on the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (WHO EML) are currently available in LLMICs. In 2020, more than 3.5 million new cancer cases were diagnosed in LLMICs and an estimated 2.3 million premature deaths were caused by cancer. If left unchecked, deaths from cancer in LLMICs are expected to rise to 4 million by 2040.¹

Prof. Anil D’Cruz, President of UICC and Director of Oncology at Apollo Hospitals in India, explains: *“Simply making affordable cancer medicines available does not guarantee that people living with cancer will receive the medicines they need at the right time. This new partnership is set up to ensure that low- and lower-middle income countries get the support they need to receive the essential cancer medicines where they are currently lacking, as well as the training on their use so that their availability becomes sustainable long term and addresses the specific needs of each country with respect to its cancer burden.”*

Today, there are many access initiatives in operation that seek to improve the delivery of essential cancer medicines to people who need them in LLMICs. The ATOM Coalition brings these excellent initiatives together to generate synergies, exchange best practices and streamline efforts between in-country and global partners.

The ATOM Coalition will build on UICC’s network of member organisations in selected countries as well as on the range of global and country-level public and private sector partners with expertise in implementing cancer-focused access programmes. This will amplify the effectiveness of ATOM Coalition partners and enable countries to increase access to diagnostics and essential cancer medicines.

The ATOM Coalition partners seek to build a sustainable operating model that facilitates access over time, as breakthroughs occur, to new medicines that can have a significant health impact in LLMICs, whilst ensuring that today’s effective medicines are more widely available across those countries in a sustainable manner.

¹ *Globocan 2020*: For Low-Income Countries: <https://gco.iarc.fr/today/data/factsheets/populations/989-low-income-fact-sheets.pdf>; for Low Middle-Income Countries: <https://gco.iarc.fr/today/data/factsheets/populations/988-low-middle-income-fact-sheets.pdf>



In particular, ATOM Coalition partners will work together to:

- work with governments in LLMICs to assess their country's ability to receive and use cancer medicines, agreeing and then addressing the gaps they have in making more medicines available to cancer patients;
- support governments in LLMICs to develop sustainable health financing, which covers adequate staffing and medicines for cancer treatment;
- support the development of sustainable diagnostic and pathology capacity;
- implement training and education programmes for health care workers and supportive care staff on evidence-based treatment guidelines, protocols and management of adverse reactions;
- provide support in streamlining regulatory processes, procurement, forecasting and supply chain management;
- support generic and biosimilar manufacturers to develop, register and supply quality-assured essential cancer medicines at affordable prices in ATOM focus countries;
- provide the necessary means to make available new medicines of significant public health importance for LLMICs through voluntary licensing and other channels.

The ATOM Coalition will be formally launched on Sunday 22 May 2022 at a UICC side event of the World Health Assembly in Geneva.

The ATOM Coalition will be structured as an informal alliance comprised of all ATOM partners and key representatives from target countries and led by a governing council. UICC will serve as Secretariat of the ATOM Coalition and coordinate ATOM partners in their shared ambition to work collectively in target ATOM countries. The ATOM Coalition will also include regional and national organisations within its governance structure, ensuring that it properly represents the needs of cancer patients in LLMICs.

In the first phase of operations, the ATOM Coalition will support the implementation of intensive coordinated capacity building activities in up to 10 countries, expanding to other LLMICs over time, and will focus on increasing access to medicines in over half of countries currently classified as LLMICs.

For more information on the ATOM Coalition, including a full list of partners, please visit [“The Access to Oncology \(ATOM\) Coalition”](#) webpage.

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ATOM Coalition partners

The ATOM Coalition is bringing together a unique and powerful group of organisations and companies from different sectors to address the challenge of access to cancer medicines in



LLMICs. Together, these organisations currently operate in more than 100 countries and collectively have decades of experience helping improve cancer treatment and care in low- and middle-income countries.

The current partners committed to the ATOM Coalition include (as at 18 May 2022):

African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer (AORTIC), American Society for Clinical Oncology (ASCO), American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP), AstraZeneca, BeiGene, BIO Ventures for Global Health (BGVH), Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS), Direct Relief, Health Financing Institute, Gilead Sciences, International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA), International Generic and Biosimilar medicines Association (IGBA), McCabe Centre for Law & Cancer, National Comprehensive Cancer Network® (NCCN®), Novartis, Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes), Roche, Sanofi, Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center Global Oncology, Teva, The Defeat-NCD Partnership, The Max Foundation (Max) and the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC).

The Access to Medicine Foundation and Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) will be observers in the governance structure and collaborate with the ATOM Coalition to support its ambition to increase the availability of cancer medicines in LLMICs.

Further announcements will be made as new partners join the ATOM Coalition. The updated list can be found on [the dedicated page of the UICC website](#).

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Quotes from ATOM Coalition partners

Access to Medicine Foundation

"This initiative can really be a game changer in bridging the unacceptable inequity in access to cancer care for people in low-income countries. We at the Access to Medicine Foundation have been identifying several specific opportunities for the pharmaceutical industry and their partners to expand access to cancer treatments, and this consortium seeks to solve exactly that."

– **Jayasree K. Iyer**, CEO, Access to Medicine Foundation



All.Can International

"The work of All.Can, focused on improving cancer patient health outcomes throughout the care pathway, aims also to ensure that access to medicines is a priority across the globe."

– **Eduardo Pisani**, CEO, All.Can International

American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)

"Ensuring that every patient with cancer has access to the medicines they need is essential to providing equitable, high-quality care. We are excited to be a partner in this global effort to boost access to essential cancer medicines along with developing processes for ensuring drug quality, safe delivery, and optimal utilization."

– **Julie R. Gralow**, MD, FACP, FASCO, Chief Medical Officer, American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)

American Society of Clinical Pathology (ASCP)

"ASCP is pleased to co-found this initiative with our collaborative cancer partners globally, as we work together to expand access to high-quality cancer treatment to people in low- and lower middle-income countries. The patient is at the center of all that we do as pathologists and medical laboratory professionals. Through this initiative, cancer patients will benefit from access to the best treatments for their specific cancer without fiscal or geographic barriers."

– **E. Blair Holladay**, PhD, MASCP, SCT(ASCP) CM, CEO, American Society of Clinical Pathology (ASCP)

AstraZeneca

"A critical component of reducing cancer mortality is improving equity in cancer care. Addressing the complex and multi-faceted issues hindering access to healthcare in low and low-middle income countries is a shared responsibility and requires collaboration across many stakeholders. We are committed to working together with the ATOM Coalition and all partners involved to build more sustainable, resilient health systems by prioritising access to diagnosis and treatment for patients living with cancer."

– **Beth Hamilton**, Global Vice President Oncology Market Access & Pricing, AstraZeneca

BeiGene

"As part of our mission to drive affordable access to cancer therapies around the world, BeiGene is pleased to join this collaboration alongside other global stakeholders. Our initial investment will help build supply capacity in selected countries and aligns with BeiGene's vision to provide underserved patients greater access to lifesaving medicines. Collaborations like these are key to creating a more equitable world for cancer care, and we're excited to get to work."

– **John V. Oyler**, Co-Founder, Chairman and CEO, BeiGene



BIO Ventures for Global Health (BVGH)

"At BVGH, we believe that programs are positioned to have a sustainable impact when they build upon current healthcare systems, are driven by the priorities of in-country healthcare leaders, and place the patient at the forefront. I applaud UICC for bringing access implementers together and forming the ATOM Coalition. We are proud to be a partner and look forward to synergizing our oncology access and training programs, sharing best practices, and accelerating equitable access to high-quality cancer care."

– **Jennifer Dent**, President and CEO, BIO Ventures for Global Health (BVGH)

Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS)

"At Bristol Myers Squibb we believe that all patients, regardless of where they live, should have access to transformational medicines and quality care in view of better patient outcomes. We are proud to partner with the Access to Oncology Medicines (ATOM) Coalition led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), as part of our work to help strengthen health systems capacity, expand access to medical innovation and drive health equity globally."

– **Amadou Diarra**, Senior Vice President, Global Policy, Advocacy and Government Affairs, Bristol Myers Squibb

International Generic and Biosimilar medicines Association (IGBA)

IGBA, the International Generic and Biosimilar medicines Association, with a patient centric approach, works to improve patient access to quality-assured, safe and cost-effective medicines by promoting competition with generic and biosimilar medicines. IGBA is pleased to join the ATOM Coalition alongside many other global stakeholders. We believe that we can assist this important initiative by providing advice on off-patent medicines policies as well as on functioning frameworks for access to medicines, and support in streamlining regulatory processes. Furthermore, our sector has worldwide experience in providing generic/biosimilar oncology medicines.

– **Vivian Frittelli**, Chair, International Generic and Biosimilar medicines Association (IGBA)

International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA)

"Improving health outcomes for people living with cancer in low- and lower-middle income countries is a must. Building on 'same old' ways of working will not achieve this goal. We need to push ourselves to share ideas and expertise, inspire new thinking, and co-create new types of solutions for LMICs. We applaud the ATOM Coalition's efforts to define a multi-stakeholder model that encourages global and local collaborations to positively impact the lives of people living with cancer."

– **Thomas Cueni**, Director General, **International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA)**

The Max Foundation (Max)

“The Max Foundation is proud to be a founding partner in the ATOM Coalition and share our 20 years of experience accelerating health equity for people living with cancer in the low-income world. We have witnessed the power of collaborative partnerships to erase the gap in patient outcomes in certain cancers in low- and lower middle-income countries and we believe the launch of ATOM is an important milestone on the journey to expand access to cancer medicines for all in need.”

– **Pat Garcia-Gonzalez**, CEO, The Max Foundation (Max)

Medicines Patent Pool

“For us at the Medicines Patent Pool, it is so important that people everywhere have access to the essential medicines they need, with cancer treatments often being particularly unaffordable. But access is about so much more than just affordability. Available diagnostics, well-trained healthcare staff, good infrastructure and adequate government investment are equally vital. So we are delighted to be part of the ATOM consortium with its holistic approach to access. ATOM will show that sustainable access for people in low- and lower middle-income countries is eminently feasible and we will no longer have excuses for failing to deliver that access.”

– **Charles Gore**, Executive Director, Medicines Patent Pool

National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN)

“Pain and suffering from cancer is felt everywhere on earth; we have to work together in order to advance cancer care for all. NCCN is proud to be part of the ATOM Coalition and everything UICC does to improve cancer outcomes worldwide. Our experience supporting in-country partners –including work on NCCN Framework and NCCN Harmonized Guidelines for Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean – has taught us that clinical practice guidelines can be both instructional and aspirational. Standardised treatment practices provide governments and providers with a resource to anticipate medication needs, thereby reducing overall costs and improving health outcomes.”

– **Robert W. Carlson**, MD, CEO, National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN)

Novartis

“That three in four cancer deaths occur in the poorest countries around the world, often for lack of early diagnosis or care is a global injustice that demands innovative solutions. We have seen great gains in cancer survival in the richest countries over the last decade, however the benefits of these advancements are not reaching everyone – leaving a risk of cancer becoming a disease that disproportionately kills the poor. As part of Novartis commitment to address the needs of underserved populations and bring our medicines to patients, no matter where they live, we are proud to be the first pharmaceutical company to contribute a targeted therapy to this coalition, which we hope will provide a new model for the sector to help close the gaps in access to life-changing medicines.”

– **Dr Lutz Hegemann**, President, Global Health and Chief Strategy & Growth Officer, Novartis

Project ECHO

“Too often, whether or not someone is able to receive quality cancer care depends on where they live, their income or the colour of their skin. With our ATOM partners we will go even further, using the ECHO Model to create more equitable access to cancer screening and treatment for people around the world.”

– **Dr Sanjeev Arora**, Founder and Director, Project ECHO

Roche Pharma

“Improving global access to quality cancer care is a core commitment at Roche. We recognise that a challenge of this scale and scope cannot be overcome alone. This is why we have been early supporters of ATOM, working closely with our coalition partners to find the best ways to combine our expertise and strengths in diagnostics and pharmaceuticals to make a real difference for patients. I am personally very excited about the impact that ATOM will have and I look forward to the next phase of its evolution.”

– **Teresa Graham**, Head of Global Product Strategy, Roche Pharma

Sanofi

“Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide, with a disproportionate impact on people living in the poorest countries. Tackling the burden of cancer requires close collaboration between all partners. At Sanofi, we are delighted to be part of ATOM’s initiative and shine a light on cancer care by helping strengthen healthcare systems in LMICs including improving access to essential cancer medicines.”

– **Josep Catlla**, Head of Corporate Affairs, Sanofi

The Defeat-NCD Partnership

“The Defeat-NCD Partnership is committed to practically collaborating with the ATOM Coalition by making its Essential NCD Supplies Facility available, to ATOM Coalition members, their partner institutions, and programme countries, as the practical pooled procurement mechanism for countries and institutions to benefit from quality-assured, and fairer-priced cancer supplies. The large inequalities in terms of people accessing accurate knowledge, quality and affordable diagnostics, supplies, and care in low resource settings are evident and well recognized. We see great potential and opportunities for partners to contribute concretely towards reduction of these gaps through their support to the work of such public-private partnerships.”

– **Mukul Bhola**, CEO, The Defeat-NCD Partnership

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