

The Global Chagas Disease Coalition

New York, 14th December 2012

Chagas disease is a silent killer. Throughout the Americas, an estimated 10 million people, most of whom are predominantly poor and marginalized, are infected by this deadly parasite in Latin America. Children are particularly affected. With globalisation, the disease is increasingly found in the United States, Europe, Australia, and Japan. The U.S. is now the seventh most affected nation worldwide. Tens of thousands of patients die each year from Chagas disease. About 30% of chronically infected individuals will develop heart complications with high probability of death. Less than 0.2% receive treatment today. New problems are emerging notably with maternal-to-child transmission, which could become the new face of Chagas.

Chagas is a hidden public health crisis needing urgent and increased attention.

As researchers, clinicians, patients, funders, civil society, and public health practitioners engaged in research and development (R&D) and implementation of treatment and prevention programs, we have decided to join forces to create a coalition aimed at changing the future of Chagas disease.

Since 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) have developed strategic plans supporting national control programs in endemic countries. Other recent initiatives such as the 2012 Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases London Declaration have included Chagas disease as a priority.

This context represents an unprecedented opportunity to help to define a patient-centered agenda that boosts access to existing health tools and treatments while expanding global efforts to stimulate innovation for new and improved tools to control Chagas disease.

We call for:

- a. **Access:** It is time to treat now by facilitating access to existing health tools in endemic areas and ensuring strong political commitment from affected countries. Chagas disease is an emergency. There is an urgent need to improve prevention of all forms of transmission, save lives, improve the quality of life of people infected, and avoid the enormous costs related to disease progression on individual patients, families, caregivers, clinicians, and health systems.
- b. **Innovation:** We need a global Chagas research and development (R&D) agenda that sets priorities, identifies gaps, and coordinates the efforts of the R&D community (academia, multilaterals, donors, private sector, public institutes, governments) toward clearly defined targets and milestones for needed drugs, diagnostics, vaccines and other essential health technologies.
- c. **Transmission Control:** It is mandatory to continue to work towards prevention of different forms of transmission in endemic and non-endemic countries
- d. **Advocacy:** Public and policy awareness of Chagas disease must be increased immediately; mobilization of political support with financial and technical resources must become a priority.

It is time to join forces and synergize efforts. The Global Chagas Disease Coalition is an open, ambitious, collaborative alliance where together, through the sharing of expertise, knowledge, and capacity for action, we hope to achieve the goal of alleviating human suffering caused by Chagas and ultimately, controlling Chagas disease once and for all.

With the following partners institutions:

Federation of Patients “Fin de Chagas”, DNDi, Instituto Carlos Slim de la Salud, Sabin Vaccine Institute, Fundación Mundo Sano, CEADES, ISGlobal