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Tuberculosis kills almost two million people a year – but it is curable, and its spread can be stopped

- *Leading experts gather in Spain to discuss key aspects of tuberculosis control*
- *TB kills nearly four people per minute and is spreading also in developed countries*
- *Strict control measures and appropriate drug use are key to control and cure*

Basel, June 11, 2008 – Leading international experts on tuberculosis (TB), the leading infectious cause of death in adults worldwide, meet this week in Spain to discuss ways of combating a disease that is increasingly emerging as a major health problem in developed countries.

The Sandoz-sponsored symposium entitled “What Are We Doing to Stop TB?” is the fourth event of its kind, but is being held for the first time in Europe. Starting on June 12, the two-day scientific symposium in Barcelona brings together roughly 50 experts from more than a dozen countries to discuss key aspects of tuberculosis (TB) control.

Decio Decaro, Country Head Sandoz Spain, says: “TB is a major global health concern, which is compounded by growing drug resistance and the increasing number of patients also infected with HIV. However, the good news is that it is stoppable and can be cured – if everyone concerned works together to implement strict diagnostic and control strategies and to ensure widespread access to high-quality medicines in the proper dosage and combination.”

TB is the leading infectious cause of adult morbidity and mortality worldwide, killing 1.7 million people a year – or nearly one person every 15 seconds. About two billion people around the world are infected with TB bacilli. If not treated, each person with active pulmonary TB will pass the disease on average to a further 10 to 15 people.

There are growing incidence rates of TB within Europe, mainly in Eastern European countries, which account for about 70% of all cases. Throughout the region, the presence of TB is often related to social and economic factors and migration. In Spain, there were around 13,000 new TB cases in 2006, mostly in people of foreign origin.

The World Health Organization recently announced plans to improve TB control worldwide through the use of measures including improved diagnostic tools and strict monitoring of high-risk populations to prevent the spread of the disease and facilitate access to treatment.

One key issue on the symposium agenda will be how best to deal with multi-drug resistant TB, a form of the disease that often fails to respond to standard first line drugs. A new form identified recently, extensively drug resistant TB (XDR TB), is resistant to both first and second line standard drugs. In 2008, the WHO reported the highest rates of multi-drug resistant TB ever recorded.

Klaus Leisinger, President and CEO of the Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development and one of the speakers at the Barcelona symposium, says: "The scale of this problem and its complexity call for the active commitment of all those who can help to find a solution, be they in the private, public or NGO sector. The first step is to raise public awareness of this global issue, which affects a large part of the world's population either directly or indirectly."

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About Sandoz

Sandoz, a Division of the Novartis group, is a global leader in the field of generic pharmaceuticals, offering a wide array of high-quality, affordable products that are no longer protected by patents. Sandoz has a portfolio of more than 950 compounds and sells its products in more than 130 countries. Key product groups include antibiotics, treatments for central nervous system disorders, gastrointestinal medicines, cardiovascular treatments and hormone therapies. Sandoz develops, produces and markets these medicines along with pharmaceutical and biotechnological active substances and anti-infectives. In addition to strong organic growth in recent years, Sandoz has made a series of acquisitions including Lek (Slovenia), Sabex (Canada), Hexal (Germany) and Eon Labs (US). In 2007, Sandoz employed around 23,000 people worldwide and posted sales of USD 7.2 billion.

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