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## Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases inaugurates new Indonesian research initiative to study dengue fever, tuberculosis and malaria

- *NITD partnership with the Eijkman Institute and Hasanuddin University to expand the Singapore-based research institute's capabilities and expertise*
- *Focus on developing novel research approaches for some of the world's most neglected diseases – dengue fever, tuberculosis and malaria*
- *New laboratories in Makassar, Indonesia, to conduct patient studies involving epidemiology, diagnostics, biomarker technologies and new drug candidates*

**Makassar, Indonesia, January 25, 2007** – The Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases (NITD) announced today the opening of a new clinical research initiative in Indonesia that will further expand the capabilities of the Singapore-based institute to conduct research for tuberculosis, dengue fever and malaria – three of the world's most neglected diseases.

This new collaboration involves the NITD, the Eijkman Institute in Jakarta and the Hasanuddin University Clinical Research Institute in Makassar. The three organizations will create a joint research initiative that will recruit top scientists from Indonesia and also provide NITD researchers direct access to hospitals and patients suffering from these diseases in a “real-life” context. The NITD will also train and educate young students, post-doctorate candidates and healthcare staff.

The official name of this new collaboration is NEHCRI (the NITD – Eijkman Institute – Hasanuddin University Clinical Research Initiative). NEHCRI will be located at the Eijkman Institute in Jakarta and at the Dr. Wahidin Sudirohusodo Hospital in Makassar.

Novartis offers its broad expertise in all aspects of drug discovery and development as well as technologies, financial resources and local clinical expertise in tropical diseases. This is the latest in a series of investments by Novartis to discover and develop novel treatments for these tropical diseases, and will further strengthen translational clinical research in this area.

The Eijkman Institute offers an excellent facility to enhance the study of molecular biology and biochemistry of dengue fever, TB and malaria. The medical faculty of Hasanuddin University will establish a clinical research unit devoted to patient studies in epidemiology, diagnostics, biomarker technologies and novel drug candidates.

“As part of our commitment to tropical disease research, scientists at NITD will now have direct access to patients and their physicians in a setting typical for many patients suffering from TB, dengue or malaria,” said Professor Paul Herrling, Chairman of NITD and Head of Corporate Research at Novartis. “We believe this initiative will particularly help us to design better treatments for patients in endemic regions.”

“Neglected diseases occurring in developing countries lack the sound epidemiology and clinical patho-physiology that are the bedrock of drug discovery,” said Professor Idrus Paturusi, Rector of

the Hasanuddin University in Makassar. “The new NEHCRI center will be a great benefit to the Indonesian clinician research community, both as a center of excellence and an opportunity for Indonesian researchers.”

Professor Sangkot Marzuki, Director of the Eijkman Institute, said, “Clinical trial sites in developing countries are not very common and also not very well developed. The establishment of NEHCRI will positively impact the quality of patient care and programs, both in Asia and around the world.”

The need for new medicines to help patients with dengue fever, TB or malaria is urgent given data from the World Health Organization (WHO) showing that the incidence of these diseases is accelerating rapidly, especially in developing countries.

More than 58,000 new cases of dengue fever, a virus transmitted to humans through bites from infected mosquitoes, were discovered in Indonesia in 2004, while some 2.5 billion people worldwide are estimated to be at risk for the disease.

The prevalence of TB is also alarming: about one-third of the world’s population is latently infected with this bacterial infection based on estimates that about two million people die every year from this disease.

Malaria also remains a pressing public health issue and one of the most dangerous diseases. A largely preventable disease, about 300-650 million people each year become infected with this disease, which kills one to three million people a year worldwide.

#### **About the Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases (NITD)**

The Novartis Institute for Tropical Disease (NITD) aims to discover novel treatments and prevention methods for major tropical diseases. In those developing countries where these diseases are endemic, Novartis intends to make treatments readily available without profit to poor patients. The Singapore-based institute is striving to become known in the areas of dengue fever, tuberculosis and malaria, contributing to the education of young scientists and being a role model for public-private partnerships in Southeast Asia. NITD is aiming to have at least two compounds in clinical trials by 2008, and one novel compound available to patients by 2012.

#### **About the Eijkman Institute**

The Eijkman Institute carries out fundamental research in biomedical areas of strategic importance to Indonesia, including molecular biology related research. The Institute’s research program was developed following a strategy to ensure scientific performance at an internationally competitive level. In addition, the Institute will offer an excellent facility to enhance the study of molecular biology and biochemistry of dengue fever and TB.

#### **About the Medical Faculty of Hasanuddin University**

The Medical Faculty of Hasanuddin University is one of the most prominent medical schools in Indonesia. The Faculty is located in Makassar, a strategic city and the center for development in the eastern region of Indonesia. The Medical Faculty will establish a clinical research unit devoted to patient studies of new diagnostics, biomarker technologies and novel drug candidates.

#### **About Novartis**

Novartis AG (NYSE: NVS) is a world leader in offering medicines to protect health, cure disease and improve well-being. Our goal is to discover, develop and successfully market innovative products to treat patients, ease suffering and enhance the quality of life. We are strengthening our medicine-based portfolio, which is focused on strategic growth platforms in innovation-driven pharmaceuticals, high-quality and low-cost generics, human vaccines and leading self-medication OTC brands. Novartis is the only company with leadership positions in these areas. In 2006, the Group's businesses achieved net sales of USD 37.0 billion and net income of USD 7.2 billion.

Approximately USD 5.4 billion was invested in R&D. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Novartis Group companies employ approximately 101,000 associates and operate in over 140 countries around the world. For more information, please visit <http://www.novartis.com>.

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