

Buy-down agreement to reduce cost of Xpert MTB/RIF cartridges by 40% for high-burden countries

In a drive to expand adoption of the Xpert[®] MTB/RIF test, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNITAID recently announced their agreement to significantly reduce the cost of this rapid TB diagnostic tool in 145 high-burden countries. This agreement will fund the buy-down of the Xpert MTB/RIF cartridges from \$16.86 to \$9.98, effective as of 6 August 2012.

"When motivated partners work together, interventions accelerate at all levels," said Dr. Lucica Ditiu, Executive Secretary of the Stop TB Partnership. "This agreement will translate into life-saving care for people affected by TB."

Xpert is an innovative, rapid, fully automated diagnostic system for detection in less than two hours of TB and resistance to rifampicin. The delivery of rapid and accurate results based on the Xpert MTB/RIF assay considerably improves diagnosis of TB and enables immediate treatment of patients with the appropriate regimen. Simple cartridge-based sample processing requires minimal bio-safety and training, making it possible for highly accurate molecular testing to be used outside conventional laboratories in high-burden countries.

FIND recognized the potential of the GeneXpert system for revolutionizing the diagnosis of TB and in 2006 signed a partnership agreement with Cepheid for the development of a test designed specifically for the detection of TB in developing countries. In 2010, the WHO endorsed the Xpert MTB/RIF for use in low-resource settings as the initial diagnostic test MDR-TB or TB/HIV co-infection suspects. As part of its role in the development and evaluation process, FIND negotiated a price reduction at launch of the new system of more than 75% for the public health sector and not-for-profit agencies in 145 countries.

"We applaud this initiative that represents another important milestone towards widespread access to the Xpert test and acknowledges the ground-breaking role that this technology is already playing in improving TB control in the developing world," said Philippe Jacon, FIND Chief Executive Officer. "The 750 GeneXpert instruments, comprising 3,600 modules, and over 1.1 million Xpert MTB/RIF cartridges procured as of June 2012 can be considered as a reward FIND and partners' development efforts of which we are all very proud."

The technological advance of Xpert and its facilitated introduction in high-endemic countries have great potential to save lives around the globe, especially since MDR-TB and TB in HIV positive individuals are difficult to diagnose using conventional diagnostic methods. In addition, the GeneXpert platform can be used to perform other diagnostic tests besides TB, which will further increase its cost-effectiveness over time and foster the integration of disease programs.