



Research: Critical for Global Health

Benjamin Franklin wisely observed that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

This is especially true when it comes to the fight for global health: It is preferable to prevent the spread of disease rather than wait for illness to strike and then attempt to treat it. Prevention is also more cost-effective, especially for diseases that require extensive, lengthy treatment.

Nevertheless, we have no vaccines for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria – three of the world’s deadliest killers, making effective treatment essential. Yet our drug arsenals for these diseases are grossly inadequate due to drug resistance. Existing methods for diagnosing TB and malaria are antiquated and inaccurate. And what’s more, some diseases have become resistant to existing treatments.

In addition, one billion people in tropical regions around the world suffer from infectious diseases that receive so little attention that they are often referred to as “neglected tropical diseases.” Examples include African Sleeping Sickness and its South American counterpart, Chagas disease. There are no vaccines for any of the neglected tropical diseases, and most of these diseases lack effective treatments.

The Need for Research

Providing existing treatments to those who currently suffer from disease, through programs such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria; the President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI); and the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), is extremely important.

However, diseases change over time. Because diseases can develop resistance to the drugs that are used to treat them, treatments that work today may not work tomorrow. In addition, accurate diagnostics prevent overtreatment that can lead to drug resistance. Vaccines, when they become available, will reduce the number of people needing treatment and, therefore, reduce the amount of drug resistance.

It is the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that provide funding for the medical research that develops vaccines, new drugs to combat drug resistance, and improved diagnostics. *The research conducted by NIH and the CDC is critical to the long-term success and fiscal viability of programs such as the Global Fund, PMI, and PEPFAR.*

Preventing the spread of disease is critical to global health, and it hinges on research conducted by NIH and the CDC. Funding for NIH and the CDC is absolutely essential for global health – and for the health of our nation.