Italy’s global health R&D

Funding to global health R&D is low but Italy has been vocal about improving market transparency for drugs

Italy’s support to research and development (R&D) for poverty-related and neglected diseases (PRNDs), referred to as ‘global health R&D’ in this profile, has been very low so far and Italy is not a top donor. According to G-FINDER data, based on a survey covering a select group of products in need of R&D, Italy has not reported significant financial contributions to global health R&D since 2012. These figures may differ from the trend numbers presented in the chart due to changes in the scope of the G-FINDER survey from year to year.

In 2017, Italy contributed only US$1.5 million to global health R&D, of which 93% went to vaccines research and 7% to basic research at the Italian National Institute of Health, Istituto Superiore di Sanita (ISS). All of the funding was for R&D for HIV/AIDS.

Italy is part of the ‘European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership’ (EDCTP 2). Global health R&D is not featured in the three-year Programming Guidelines and Directions for Italian Development Cooperation 2017-2019 which explains the low funding levels.

Recently, Italy put forward a resolution on improving market transparency for drugs, vaccines, and other health-related technologies which was accepted by Member States during the 72nd session of the World Health Assembly (WHA) in May 2019. The resolution “urges member states in accordance with their national and regional legal frameworks and contexts” to make information on net prices public, and to support dissemination, availability, and overall transparency of procurement price data. However, the final resolution does not empower WHO to collect and analyze concrete data on drug manufacturer’s production costs, which had been the central aim of earlier drafts of the resolution.

Further information: G-FINDER

G-FINDER is a data source developed by Policy Cures Research that provides information on global investments into R&D for neglected diseases. Figures in this section are based on the G-FINDER survey, which covers basic research and product-related R&D (drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics) for a select group of diseases. The G-FINDER scope has been defined by an expert committee, in line with three criteria: the disease disproportionately affects people in developing countries, there is a need for new products, and the commercial incentives are insufficient to attract R&D from private industry.

For more information: www.policycuresresearch.org

Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the main funder for global health R&D

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has policy leadership around global health R&D and is responsible for the majority of funding to the issue.

In April 2016, the government set up a new Center for Global Health as part of the Italian National Institute for Health (ISS), which focuses on R&D for neglected diseases, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, Ebola, and Zika. The center is now operational and executes research projects, including grants connected to the ‘5% initiative’. Currently, the ISS is recruiting a new Director.
ITALY’S R&D FUNDING FOR NEGLECTED DISEASES

US$ millions; in 2017 prices

Policy Cures Research, G-FINDER Public Search tool