PRESS RELEASE

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US FUNDING CUTS HARM MORE THAN EBOLA

London, 9th December, 2014 – Following claims that US funding cuts have delayed an Ebola vaccine, a new report confirms that the 2013 US budget sequester and pull-outs from the pharmaceutical industry are harming funding to develop drugs and vaccines for other neglected diseases, including tuberculosis (TB), malaria and AIDS.

The seventh annual G-FINDER report, released today, showed that $3.2bn was invested in neglected disease R&D in 2013 – a cut of $193m on the previous year. The US budget sequester was almost entirely responsible for this decrease, with the world’s largest funder, the US National Institutes of Health (US NIH), making a sequester-related cut of $188m (-13%).

“A drop of this size has to be a concern,” said report author Dr Mary Moran, Executive Director of Policy Cures. “Last year the US was fundamental in sustaining global investment levels amidst cuts from other non-US government funders, but we’re simply not seeing that for 2013.”

The G-FINDER report also found that the pharmaceutical industry is not pulling their weight in neglected disease R&D funding. The industry contributed just 12% of global funding – and their investment is on the way down, with a decrease of $74m since 2010. Although some companies are major contributors, others are not: the result is that the total global industry investment was only three-quarters that of the Gates Foundation alone – and only one-third of the US NIH’s investment, even after the sequester cuts.1

Industry cuts have been especially harmful to TB drug development, with major companies no longer filling the pipeline with new TB leads. “With drug resistance on the rise, this is particularly worrying,” commented Dr Moran, “New medicines can take a decade or more to develop. Without a strong backfill of fresh leads, there are worrying consequences for TB control in the future.”

In positive news, funding for product development partnerships (PDPs) increased by a modest $28m after dropping for the past four years, due in large part to the UK Department for International Development (DFID)’s new five-year PDP funding stream. PDPs are instrumental in the development of new tools to fight neglected diseases of patients in developing countries, and have been behind 70% of all new neglected disease drugs and vaccines developed since 2000. “Funders need to step up their funding as PDP products move into late-stage clinical trials, such as the new TB drug trials due in 2015,” urged Dr Moran.

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1 Previous reports had overstated industry neglected disease R&D funding as a result of its investment in the potentially lucrative dengue vaccine market, which has been excluded from the report scope this year.
Dr Moran gave a candid assessment: “If we want effective medicines for diseases like Ebola, TB and malaria, then governments and industry do need to do better. Too many of the world’s big economies, and too many of the world’s top drug companies, are still missing from the funding table.”

The 2014 G-Finder Report will be launched on Tuesday December 9, 2014 from 16:00 to 18:00 GMT in London.

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G-FINDER: Global Funding of Innovation for Neglected Diseases. The full G-FINDER report can be found here: http://policycures.org/gfinder.html

ABOUT G-FINDER:
G-FINDER, now in its seventh year, is the most comprehensive report to date on public and private funding into R&D for neglected diseases like malaria, TB, HIV, pneumonia, sleeping sickness and helminth infections. The G-FINDER survey is conducted to help funders and product developers better understand where funding gaps lie and how their investments fit into the global picture. It covers 34 diseases and 138 product areas for these diseases, including drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, microbicides and vector control products. The G-FINDER survey is conducted by the independent research group Policy Cures and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. 197 organisations completed the neglected disease R&D survey in 2014, including all major public, private and philanthropic funders.

ABOUT POLICY CURES:
Policy Cures is an independent not-for-profit group providing research, information, decision-making tools and strategic analysis for those involved in the creation of new pharmaceuticals for neglected diseases. Its focus is on providing governments, funders and civil society organisations with the information they need to make optimal R&D policy and funding decisions for diseases of the developing world.