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Expansion of pediatric AIDS programs set for Lesotho

Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative adds physicians, satellite centers

HOUSTON – (July 26, 2007) – The Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative will increase the number of physicians it has assigned to Lesotho and build satellite clinics in scaling up its commitment to assist the country, one of the hardest hit by the AIDS epidemic.

Dr. Mark Kline, president of BIPAI, announced the expansion of services during a visit to Houston by Lesotho Prime Minister Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili. Kline said the number of physicians assigned to the country in southern Africa will be increased from 10 to no fewer than 14 and at least 10 satellite clinics will be built and opened, providing HIV/AIDS care and treatment services to children and families in each of Lesotho's 10 districts. The value of this new commitment is approximately \$2 million over an initial 18-month period.

"Our commitment to Lesotho began in 1999 with health professional education," said Kline, also a professor of pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine and chief of retrovirology at Texas Children's Hospital. "In full partnership with the government of the country, we have been able to open a state-of-the-art treatment center and send physician support. This expansion will allow us to care for even more children and families. It furthers the reach of this program, already a success story in saving lives."

The Baylor-Bristol-Myers Squibb Center of Excellence – Lesotho opened in 2005. Last summer, 10 members of the Pediatric AIDS Corps were assigned to Lesotho. More than 1,500 HIV-infected children already are in care in the center. This expansion of services is possible through the support of Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Children's Hospital and the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation.

"I am absolutely overwhelmed. You cannot begin to imagine what these donations will mean in the lives of ordinary children and in the lives of the nation of Lesotho," said Prime Minister Mosisili. "You have extended a helping hand to children literally on the other side of the world. Lesotho is the third in the world of

countries affected by AIDS. Through BIPAI you are literally saving the lives of thousands of our children. “

Mosisili and a team of Lesotho government officials visited Baylor and Texas Children’s a day after ceremonies in Washington, D.C. in which the U.S. government’s Millennium Challenge Corporation announced \$362.5 million in support to Lesotho. The MCC was established in 2004 to help some of the poorest countries in the world.

Kline said there was one pediatrician in the entire country of Lesotho until BIPAI sent another physician in 2005 to lead the effort to develop a pediatric treatment center. The Pediatric AIDS Corps, a joint program of BIPAI, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Baylor College of Medicine, sent 10 more physicians in August 2006. The PAC program recruits, trains and places fully-trained pediatricians and family doctors in six African countries for one year or more each. Fifty-two physicians were assigned to African sites last year. The 2007 class includes 24 new physicians and 34 returning physicians, for a total of 58 working in Africa.

“Our goal is to expand medical care for HIV-positive children and their families into the most remote areas of Lesotho,” said John Damonti, president of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation. “Through our support of the network of satellite clinics and the additional doctors, we will reach many more families in need.”

A new element for BIPAI is the establishment of satellite clinics. BIPAI’s Centers of Excellence are located in urban areas of Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Uganda. Additional centers soon will be under construction in Burkina Faso and Kenya. The new satellite clinics will provide lifesaving HIV/AIDS care and treatment to thousands of children and families residing outside of these main urban areas, extending the reach of the Centers of Excellence.

“Texas Children’s Hospital has long been a leader in improving access to care for children in the U.S.,” said Mark A. Wallace, president and CEO of Texas Children’s. “While this is a challenging endeavor at home, children throughout Africa face even greater difficulty obtaining even the most basic health care. For children with HIV/AIDS, this access could mean the difference between successful management of their disease or an untimely death. By adding satellite clinics and additional physicians, we are making significant strides in fighting this global pandemic and improving the quality of life for countless children and their families.”

Kline said the four additional pediatricians will be on the ground in Lesotho by October 2007. Some of the satellite clinics will begin operations immediately, with all targeted for full operation by December 2008.

Dr. Peter G. Traber, BCM president and CEO, said, “It is very gratifying to see the excellent work that is being done by BIPAI throughout the world. In visiting Lesotho for the opening of the treatment center in 2005, I was struck by the cooperative spirit of all those involved in tackling an enormous problem. Dr. Kline and his team are making a difference in thousands of lives throughout the world. This program is a source of great pride for Baylor College of Medicine.”

BIPAI's first center of excellence was opened in Romania in 2001. Since that time, the effort has expanded to programs in Mexico and the African countries of Botswana, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda.