

GLIVEC[®] International Patient Assistance Program

One of the first programs to tackle the growing cancer epidemic in developing countries on a global scale



Cancer in the Developing World: A Paradigm Shift

According to the latest WHO statistics, cancer causes around 7.9 million deaths worldwide each year – of which close to 70% are now occurring in the developing world. Only about 5% of the global resources spent on cancer are deployed in low- and middle-income countries and the cost of newer, targeted cancer therapies and limited healthcare infrastructure in these regions is seen as key barriers to cancer care.

Enabling Progress

As the extent of the cancer burden in developing countries was coming to the forefront, Novartis enlisted the support of Axios to help determine what they could do to address this growing epidemic. The result was the Glivec International Patient Assistance Program (GIPAP) – established by Novartis in 2002 in collaboration with Axios International and The Max Foundation. Through GIPAP, Glivec (imatinib) is donated free-of-charge to patients living with Philadelphia chromosome-positive (Ph+) chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) or with c-Kit (CD117) positive unresectable (inoperable) and/or metastatic malignant gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GISTs). The program benefits patients who cannot pay for treatment privately or lack medical insurance or government support.

Unlike traditional donation programs that deliver drugs through hospitals or other third-party organizations,

GIPAP is a “direct-to-patient” program where Glivec is delivered directly to patients through a network of more than 1,400 registered physicians in over 400 qualified treatment centers worldwide.

Axios is in charge of identifying, assessing and recommending institutions for GIPAP and ensuring that drugs are properly stored and tracked by the GIPAP institution/physician and delivered to the final recipient. The Max Foundation is responsible for providing support and information to patients, guiding physicians and patients through the GIPAP application process and reviewing and verifying patient eligibility.

Since its implementation in early 2002, GIPAP has provided Glivec to more than 53,000 patients in 81 low- and middle-income countries. Axios handles approximately 47 out of the 81 targeted countries benefiting from GIPAP. The program is seen today as one of the most comprehensive and far-reaching cancer access programs ever developed on a global scale.

Building Access and Capacity

Currently, there is no other global cancer program like GIPAP in existence and the success of the program is due in large part to its ability to drive local capacity.

According to a recently completed impact analysis¹² of GIPAP, GIPAP was found to positively impact service delivery, access to care, diagnostic capacity and select health workers’ skills at institutions involved with the program. Improvements in the utilization of CML/GIST guidelines, patient tracking systems and institutional operations were also reported. Furthermore, 65% of physicians indicated that their institutions had undertaken initiatives to increase access to cancer treatment after implementing GIPAP.

Expanding access to quality oncology diagnosis and treatment will continue to be a priority for the global health community in the years to come. In this context, as both the public and private sectors explore new sustainable access alternatives, GIPAP will surely serve as a strong foundation from which to build upon.

¹ Increasing Access to Care for Chronic Myeloid Leukemia Patients: Assessment of a Scaling-up Program. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*. Volume 24, Number 4, November 2013.

² Improving access to care in low and middle-income countries: institutional factors related to enrollment and patient outcome in a cancer drug access program. *BMC Health Services Research*, 2013, 13:304.