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**WHO Pneumonia Expert Recognized for Efforts to Ensure Children Receive  
Life-saving Vaccines**

*Gates Foundation Announcement*

*Underscores Promise of Pneumonia Vaccines to Save Lives*

**GENEVA, SWITZERLAND** – WHO pneumonia expert Dr. Thomas Cherian will be honored by a group of the world’s leading infectious disease experts today for his pivotal work to accelerate access to vaccines preventing pneumococcal disease, the world’s leading vaccine-preventable killer of children under age five. The Global Leadership Award, given annually by the Pneumococcal Awareness Council of Experts (PACE), will be presented at today’s WHO Global Immunization Meeting in Geneva, and comes on the heels of the Gates Foundation unprecedented \$10 billion commitment to fund vaccine research, development and delivery throughout the developing world.

Pneumococcal disease is a bacterial infection that causes life-threatening pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis. Every year, pneumococcal disease takes the lives of nearly 1.6 million people, nearly half of whom are young children in the developing world, where vaccines to prevent the disease are not yet in widespread use. The lack of access in these countries has been due primarily to obstacles in awareness, policy guidance and available financing for low-income countries, barriers which Dr. Cherian’s work is helping to overcome. The Gates Foundation has cited expanding access to pneumococcal vaccines as a major priority to be addressed through their \$10 billion commitment.

“PACE is pleased to bestow this honor on such a deserving steward of global health,” said Ciro de Quadros, executive vice-president of the Sabin Vaccine Institute and co-chair of PACE. “Without question, Dr. Cherian’s irrefutable body of work has helped advance medical science, inform policy, and help set the stage for recent commitments to prioritize and fund prevention of disease throughout the world.”

Over the course of a 25-year career that began at Christian Medical College in Tamil Nadu, India, Dr. Cherian, who currently serves as coordinator of the Expanded Programme on Immunization at the World Health Organization, has made significant contributions to the fight against pneumonia and pneumococcal diseases. His work includes helping to accelerate the development pneumococcal vaccines, evaluating their efficacy against pneumonia, and informing the development of the WHO protocols that today guide treatment of pneumonia and other respiratory infections in community settings around the globe. In 2009, Dr. Cherian was a member of the research team responsible for producing the first global study of pneumococcal disease burden in the last decade – and the only study

of its kind to look at the burden of this disease at the country level. As stark evidence of the toll of disease in each country, these data are considered critical to efforts to protect children from pneumococcal disease, providing decision-makers with the needed impetus to prioritize the introduction of life-saving pneumococcal conjugate vaccines.

“Dr. Cherian has dedicated his life to advancing prevention for the world’s children, and we are proud to have him leading WHO’s efforts to ensure that life-saving vaccines reach those most in need,” said WHO Assistant Director-General Daisy Mafubelu.

In 2006, WHO recommended that all countries include pneumococcal conjugate vaccines (PCVs) in their national immunization programs, especially in countries where childhood mortality is high – a criterion met by 65 developing nations. The WHO recommendation guides country policy-making on the prioritization of measures to address childhood pneumococcal disease.

“It takes a village to advance health interventions, and the achievements in pneumococcal disease prevention are due to the work of many,” said Dr. Cherian. “Working as part of WHO and together with my colleagues to help expand health interventions throughout the developing world has been a calling and a privilege.”

Now in its third year, the annual PACE Global Leadership Award recognizes one individual, organization or country that has championed pneumococcal disease prevention and made a significant contribution towards policies that advance the introduction of pneumococcal conjugate vaccines. Previous PACE Global Leadership Award recipients include the health ministers of the countries of Rwanda – the first country in Africa to introduce pneumococcal conjugate vaccines – and Costa Rica – the first country in Latin America to implement a nationwide vaccination program.

“Over the last decade, Thomas Cherian has helped accelerate the surveillance of pneumonia throughout the developing world and contributed greatly to our understanding of the global pneumococcal disease burden and the potential that pneumococcal vaccines have to save lives,” said Dr. Orin Levine, executive director of the International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC) at The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and co-chair of PACE.

PACE’s mission is to raise awareness in order to help secure global commitments to prevent pneumococcal disease throughout the world. With increased awareness and global commitment to deliver pneumococcal vaccines PACE estimates that 5-7 million young lives can be saved by 2030. The Bill & Melinda Gates foundation announced on Friday a \$10 billion commitment to fund vaccines, including those that prevent pneumococcal disease, and rotavirus, a deadly form of diarrhea, and highlighted the promise of these vaccines based on demonstrated efficacy throughout the world.

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*The **Pneumococcal Awareness Council of Experts (PACE)**, a project of the Sabin Vaccine Institute, is comprised of leading global experts in infectious diseases and vaccines. The Council raises awareness among policy-makers and aims to secure global commitments to prevent pneumococcal disease, a leading infectious killer of children and adults worldwide. The Council works through collaboration and partnership with countries, NGOs, academia and industry to achieve its goals. To learn more, visit [www.sabin.org/PACE](http://www.sabin.org/PACE).*

**Sabin Vaccine Institute** is a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing human suffering from infectious and neglected diseases. Through its efforts in vaccine research, development and advocacy, Sabin works to provide greater access to vaccines and essential medicines for millions stuck in pain, poverty and despair. Founded in 1993 in honor of Dr. Albert B. Sabin, discoverer of the oral polio vaccine, the Sabin Vaccine Institute works with prestigious institutions, scientists, medical professionals, and organizations to provide short and long-term solutions that result in healthier individuals, families and communities around the globe. For more information about Sabin's research and commitment, visit: [www.sabin.org](http://www.sabin.org).