



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

# NOTE FOR THE PRESS

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Note for the media WHO/01  
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## ADDITIONAL TWO MILLION TREATMENT COURSES OF OSELTAMIVIR DONATED TO WHO TO HELP COUNTRIES WHICH CANNOT AFFORD THE TREATMENT

**Geneva** - Today, the World Health Organization (WHO) welcomes Roche's donation of an additional two million treatment courses of oseltamivir for use in developing countries which are most likely to be affected by avian influenza in humans. The donation will be used in countries which are unable to afford the drug.

During the last two years, six countries have reported outbreaks of avian influenza caused by the H5N1 virus in people, resulting in 148 human cases and 79 deaths to date. Treatment with antiviral medicines is one way to reduce death and illness. Roche's donation of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) will be stored in different regional centres and can be shipped to developing countries which are affected by avian influenza outbreaks in people.

"Regional stockpiles of oseltamivir will allow WHO to rapidly dispatch antiviral medicines to developing countries in greatest need, in the interests of affected nations and global public health," said Dr LEE Jong-wook, Director-General of the WHO.

The donation of two million treatment courses is separate from, and in addition to the donation of three million treatment courses of August last year, which is stored centrally and is for use as part of a "rapid response stockpile" to be used exclusively at the site of an outbreak of pandemic influenza, to attempt to slow or contain its spread.

WHO is closely monitoring and helping countries to respond to outbreaks of H5 N1 in people, most recently in Turkey. To date, the H5N1 virus is spreading from infected animals to humans. However, WHO warns that H5N1 could change into a form which spreads easily from person to person, triggering an influenza pandemic.

WHO has warned countries must urgently prepare for a pandemic, which include surge capacity planning in several sectors, adequate medical supplies including the suggested stockpiling of antivirals, communications planning and other measures to manage economic and social disruption. Planning must also include international cooperation between wealthy and poor countries to reduce the opportunity for national and international spread. WHO guidance can be found at [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza).

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