

Technical Reference Team

Recommendation 10: Product Innovation

Background

The UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities for Women and Children (the Commission) was formed in 2012 by the UN Secretary-General as part of the global Every Woman Every Child (EWEC) movement. EWEC challenges the global community to increase access to and appropriate use of essential medicines, medical devices, and health supplies that effectively address the leading preventable causes of death during pregnancy, childbirth, and childhood.

Led by a wide range of high-level leaders from around the world, the Commission developed a framework for action on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (RMNCH) products that can be applied nationally and utilized in global RMNCH initiatives. The framework outlines a priority list of 13 commodities, key barriers to access and use, and 10 cross-cutting recommendations to rapidly increase both access and use. By increasing access to and use of these 13 commodities, it is estimated that 6 million women and children can be saved by 2017.

Moving forward

To help carry forward the Commission's recommendations at the global and national levels, **Global Technical Reference Teams (TRT)** were established. One group was formed for each of the 13 commodities and 10 recommendations, and an advocacy working group is dedicated to advancing cross-cutting goals. The groups carry out their work through a variety of mechanisms, including guidance documents and tools to support countries in their efforts to implement recommendations and address global and regional bottlenecks. These reference teams are coordinated by a Strategy and Coordination Team hosted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).



PATH/Evelyn Hockstein

A nurse in Nigeria draws a dose of oxytocin from a vial. One innovation that could support improved quality assurance of oxytocin are time temperature indicators.

Spotlight on Recommendation 10

For many important maternal and child health commodities, product improvements are required to facilitate demand creation. Improvements might include new formulations, packaging systems, or delivery devices. As with any medical product advancements, such improvements require investments in consumer market and product innovation research to outline the best opportunities for improvement.

Recommendation 10, Product Innovation, focuses on identifying priority product improvements for the 13 commodities. The TRT for Recommendation 10 was formed to identify innovation gaps and create new target product profiles outlining the specific attributes of a final product. During the first year the group will complete product innovation research for at least two maternal health commodities, which include oxytocin, misoprostol, and magnesium sulfate. It will also incorporate target product profiles that it develops into existing funding mechanisms and priority investments.

Group membership

PATH is the lead convener for the Recommendation 10 TRT. Other participating organizations include Absolute Return for Kids, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Children's Investment Fund Foundation, Jhpiego, Management Sciences for Health, Merck for Mothers, Monash University, the UK Department for International Development, the US Agency for International Development, and the World Health Organization.

Progress to date

The Recommendation 10 TRT is working on three main activities.

Include time temperature indicators (TTI) on all oxytocin vials:

- Develop a short technical brief and frequently asked questions document explaining TTI and its use with oxytocin.
- Consult global procurement agencies, including the United Nations Populations Fund on the requirements for including TTI on oxytocin vials and identify potential opportunities for a pilot project.
- Consult with oxytocin manufacturers on the inclusion of TTI on standard oxytocin vials.
- Evaluate the pricing implications for including TTI on standard oxytocin vials.
- Explore supply chain and training implications of including TTI on standard oxytocin vials.

Develop prototype packaging for magnesium sulfate:

- Identify the specific components for the products in partnership with the Maternal Health TRT.
- Develop a prototype magnesium sulfate pack.
- Evaluate the prototype pack(s) with healthcare professionals in up to two countries.

Develop prototype packaging for misoprostol:

- Conduct a rapid assessment of misoprostol programming in pathfinder and other countries.

- Forecast and establish a business case for misoprostol packaging improvements.
- Select a manufacturer and register the product.
- Create informational and educational materials to support product uptake and use.
- Identify additional specific needs for product innovation in partnership with other TRT.

Upcoming activities

During the coming years, the Recommendation 10 TRT will:

- Review, adapt, and estimate costs of product improvements for commodities with existing target product profiles.
- Develop prioritization criteria to advance product improvements that will lead to increased uptake, efficacy, and safety.
- Review existing and conduct new market research to establish target product profiles for at least 2 of the other 13 commodities; compare existing products to identify innovation gaps and foster product improvement recommendations (e.g. injectable antibiotics).
- Conduct outreach to national policymakers through regional workshops to assess needs and emerging innovations.
- Identify and gauge ability of existing funding mechanisms to include the TRT's target product profiles into funding priorities.
- Share new target product profiles with potential funders as they are developed.

Available resources

The Recommendation 10 TRT has developed resources to support market research and assessments in pathfinder countries. The TRT will also share product presentations and tools with countries to facilitate uptake.

Contact us

For more information or to request tools and technical assistance, please contact Catharine Taylor, PATH (taylor@path.org), or Michel Pacqué, PATH (mpacque@path.org).