

POVERTY ALLEVIATION A ROLE FOR TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE?

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Speech
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Kedrion's role in improving public health in emerging countries

Kedrion is the fifth largest manufacturer globally of plasma therapies, employing 2000 people and fractionating two million liters of plasma. These therapies are mostly used to treat a number of disorders resulting from deficiencies in essential proteins involved in various physiological processes and *are crucial in improving and maintaining the right to life and health in many individuals*. Kedrion's vision adheres to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights art 3, which states that :
'Every one has the right to life, liberty and security of person*''

Kedrion considers that health is one of those conditions, which form the basis of a right to life in all aspects of human life. Kedrion works to maintain its excellent industry standards and aspires to ongoing improvement, in order to retain its leading position in Italy and increase its share of the international market. It works to

strengthen its role as the accredited partner of the medical, scientific and institutional communities. Because of the special nature of its products, Kedrion supports people, communities and institutions in reducing or removing those obstacles that prevent people enjoying such rights and reducing their independence from poverty. The availability of cost effective and accessible therapies is also necessary for communities living in economically disadvantaged areas and suffering from debilitating illnesses which decrease the community's capacity for a healthy life while draining economic resources.

One of the most important of the Kedrion therapies is anti-Rhesus factor D, which is an immunoglobulin preparation very crucial in preventing a serious condition affecting infants called haemolytic disease of the newborn (HDN). This condition occurs when women who lack the D antigen are immunized through carrying a child who possesses it. In a later pregnancy, antibodies generated from this first pregnancy will cause serious illness in a second child bearing the D antigen, including damage to vital organs and, very frequently, death. The anti-D product, therefore, is very important in maintaining the health of millions of children.

As these diseases are expensive to treat, they do not feature prominently in the health care budgets of many emerging countries. The lack of this product in Africa, for example, is believed to affect two and a half million women each year and result in the deaths of two hundred thousand children. In order to adequately treat the mothers, It is important to know which women need to be given the anti-D product to prevent this illness in their children. Fortunately, cheap tests for the detection of the D antigen are now available which can be done at home without the need for hospital admission. *This is extremely relevant for areas such as Africa where the rate of urban development is relatively low and the difficulties in the logistics of transport to hospitals and other centralised health facilities can present a strong discriminatory influence against these communities.*

Another major public health problem in Africa has arisen through the high prevalence of Hepatitis B, a disease of the liver caused by an infection by a virus (HBV). Two billion people globally are infected by the virus, of whom 240 million develop a chronic state leading to severe illness including cancer of the liver. Women infected with the virus will have a great likelihood of transmitting it to their unborn children. This disease can be prevented by vaccination, but the needs imposed by Hepatitis B have been overshadowed by the requirements and the funding for HIV, with the result that many people are still being infected. An immunoglobulin preparation provided by Kedrion can be used to treat people with chronic infection, and, similarly to anti-D, will prevent the infection of unborn children with this deadly virus.

These therapies also include haemophilia, a disease of the blood clotting system leading to life threatening bleeding. The worldwide prevalence of Haemophilia is 1:10.000 people. This disease can be successfully treated by administering anti haemophilic factors such as those manufactured by Kedrion . For successful treatment, accurate and rapid diagnosis of the patients is a prerequisite, which is often precluded in economically challenged countries which cannot access the required laboratory facilities. This affects severely the health and quality of life of these patients, adding a human and economical burden to their communities populations and compromising their social progression.

In summary, Kedrion is deeply committed to providing safe and effective therapies, according to the best technologies, which can contribute to the improvement of public health in emerging countries. Beside the treatments and the vaccines, the availability of new tests, easy to use and cost effective, able to detecting some of the related diseases can turn in a high improvement of the health life conditions for millions of people who suffer the lack of such tools.

Increasing the awareness of these conditions and the role of treatments is a high priority for the company.