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## ***Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM)***

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### **McGill and the University of Calgary join UBC to Adopt Global Access Licensing Principles helping to ensure accessibility and affordability of life-saving medicines developed with taxpayer dollars**

**Calgary and Montreal, Canada:** Lifesaving medicines developed at the University of Calgary and McGill University will now be made more accessible and affordable for those who need them. Student-driven organization Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM) is proud to announce that the University of Calgary has recently adopted Global Access Licensing Principles, and McGill University has also announced an upcoming adoption. These two universities join the University of British Columbia (UBC), a pioneer in Canada, which introduced GAL in 2007. Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM) is a global grassroots movement of university students and academics organizing on their campuses to ensure that publicly-funded medical research meets the needs of people everywhere regardless of income.

Global Access Licensing (GAL) specifically refers to a set of licensing principles and strategies that promote access to medicines and life-saving health technologies that are developed within university labs and are publicly-funded. Intellectual property can pose a significant barrier to affordability of medicines for vulnerable and marginalized populations, due to exorbitant prices resulting from a lack of competition. In response, UAEM students formed the GAL framework, which include directives for providing non-exclusive licensing for technologies to increase access in low- and middle-income countries. GAL has most often been implemented at universities across the world directly stemming from student advocacy and engagement. In May 2008, UBC issued its first licensing deal in accordance to the GAL in order to disseminate an oral formulation of Amphotericin B to target the infectious diseases Leishmaniasis.

“This is an incredible display of student advocacy at the local level that has the potential for tremendous impact on access to medicines globally “ said Merith Basey, Executive Director of UAEM North America.

Isabel Levine, UAEM McGill chapter President said “Our McGill UAEM chapter couldn’t be more excited about our university’s commitment to Global Access Licensing. We look forward to finalizing the wording of the GAL framework document, and to hold McGill accountable to its principles once it is published. There is always more to be done, but what a great step in our fight for access to medicines.”

“It’s very exciting that the University of Calgary has taken this step to promote global access to medicines, demonstrating commitment to global citizenship in line with its EyesHigh goals”, said Asha Hollis, MSc/MD student at the University of Calgary

The adoption of global licensing principles by two leading universities in Canada comes at a critical moment for Canada as UAEM Advisory Board Member Rachel Kiddell-Monroe and Student member Louise Kyle testified on October 18th in front of the Standing Committee on Health on Bill M-132. On behalf of UAEM the team proposed the adoption of GAL principles as the starting point to many new medicines for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The adoption of GAL would attach a non-exclusive licensing requirement to any funding from the CIHR, a publicly-funded institution that invests \$1 billion every year in health research. “What we see, is it's actually a very simple proposition. Basically, it's that medicines funded by the public should be accessible to the public” said Kiddell-Monroe. Dr. Jason Nickerson of Doctors without Borders Canada also served as a key witness calling for increased transparency, and reinforcing UAEM’s position on publicly-funded research: “ensuring a public return on public investment should be a guiding principle of publicly funded health research”.

The commitments made by McGill and the University of Calgary, combined with the efforts of the current Canadian government to curtail high drug costs, marks a historic shift in the discourse surrounding affordable healthcare. Public institutions are working towards implementing effective solutions that do justice to public funding of medical research. These commitments signal to the rest of the country--and to other publicly funded institutions worldwide--that Canada is a shining example of dedication to its people and their health. Research intensive universities and institutions that have not committed to adopting GAL can look to the language introduced by McGill, U of C and UBC to join their ranks in urgently addressing barriers that lead to preventable deaths from treatable diseases. Kyle said that “where a private pharmaceutical corporation is responsible to its shareholders, universities answer to the public”, and UAEM urges students--and the public--to hold their publicly-funded institutions accountable.

**Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM)**

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