

From: Gan Quan <qgan@theunion.org>
Sent: 18 May 2021 20:49
To: emlsecretariat
Subject: [EXT] The Union Fully Supports Two New Tobacco Cessation Pharmacotherapy Applications to The Essential Medicines List (EML)

Dear Dr Huttner,

The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union), a one-hundred-year-old scientific organization focused on improving the lives of the most vulnerable people in low- and middle- income countries, appreciates the opportunity to make a statement regarding two important developments. We whole heartedly support WHO's application for Bupropion to be included on the Essential Medicines List (EML), as well as Pfizer's request that its product, Varenicline, also be added to the List.

Along with nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs), Bupropion and Varenicline are critically important smoking cessation aids. These medications reduce nicotine cravings and withdrawal symptoms, making smokers far more likely to succeed in their efforts to stop using tobacco products. While they are widely available in high-income countries, these products are either not available in LMICs or prohibitively expensive. The net result is that some of the most marginalized smokers lack access to medicines that can save their lives and turn the tide on an epidemic, which kills more than eight million people each year. According to WHO, some 780 million people say they want to quit tobacco, but only 30% have access to the tools needed to overcome the mental and physical addictions that keep them hooked.

This must change. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic—and the sufficient evidence that smokers are more likely to experience extreme disease outcomes—there has never been a better or more urgent moment to ensure that everyone interested in quitting smoking has access to drugs that improve the probability of success. Bupropion and Varenicline are safe, cost-effective, and efficacious. They must be included on a list of minimum medicines needed to create a basic health care system.

We strongly support both applications.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Gan Quan
Director, Tobacco Control Department
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