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COUNTRIES SLOW TO USE LIFE-SAVING DIARRHOEA TREATMENTS FOR CHILDREN

GENEVA – Many children are not benefiting from simple life-saving treatments for diarrhoea, the second leading cause of death of children aged under five years, according to a paper published today in the international public health journal, the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*.

Every year around 1.5 million children die of the consequences of diarrhoea – severe dehydration and fluid loss. In 2004 WHO and UNICEF recommended two low-cost treatments that have the potential to reduce more than three quarters of all diarrhoea deaths: a new formulation of oral rehydration salts and the use of zinc supplements.

“Unfortunately, despite the evidence, an extremely small number of children in developing countries have access to these two simple and inexpensive treatments,” says co-author Dr Robert E Black from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in the United States of America. Some countries are struggling to develop local supplies of the products, others are slow to change their policies.

“Of 68 priority countries only 22 had zinc available and coverage within those countries was often quite limited. Ranked by leading global economists as the most cost-effective intervention for advancing human development, zinc supplementation in diarrhoea management should be a top global health priority,” he says.

Read the research paper here: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/87/10/08-058990.pdf>

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Further items in this issue of the Bulletin include:

- Interview with Professor Zhou Yiqing, the man who developed the first artemisinin-based combination therapy for malaria.
- Vaccinating 350 000 health workers against hepatitis B in Peru.
- Concerns about a private equity fund manager’s role in providing aid in Africa.

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- Link between pesticide exposure and suicide in rural China.
- How Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians cooperate on disease surveillance despite the political divide.
- The effects of legislation on intellectual property and access to medicines in Central America.
- HIV/AIDS antiretroviral therapy has a significant effect on mortality rates in South Africa.

The *Bulletin's* table of contents can be found at:

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