December 12, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in support of Gynuity, Venture Strategies and POPPHI’s urgent request to include misoprostol in the World Health Organization (WHO)’s Essential Medicines List for the prevention of postpartum hemorrhage. The signatories of this letter are principal investigators, senior foreign investigators and U.S. National Institute of Health officers representing the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)-supported Global Research Network for Women and Children’s Health.

Of note, the Belgaum India site, a member of the Global Network, has conducted the seminal randomized, placebo controlled trial which reported a 47% reduction in the rate PPH and an 80% reduction in severe PPH; the results of which were published and incorporated in the Cochrane Data Base. Indeed, WHO, in its consensus report summarizing its technical consultation related to prevention of PPH, concluded that the use of misoprostol for the purpose of PPH prevention should be encouraged in the absence of oxytocin availability. We support this conclusion and believe that misoprostol use solely for G.I. ulcer prevention, or for abortion, sends an inappropriate message to health ministries that are awaiting the vital EML designation for PPH prevention. In many cases, such indication will allow for appropriate availability of drug, particularly in areas where refrigeration is not available and in areas where availability of skilled birth attendants are limited. Recognizing that postpartum hemorrhage is the leading cause of maternal mortality worldwide, the importance of this proposed initiative by WHO is even more pressing.

Published studies employing 600 micrograms of oral misoprostol suggest a significant reduction in mean postpartum blood loss along with absence of significant, severe, side effects. Clearly the risk/benefit ratio favors supporting expanded use of this
important drug by the WHO, as a reflection of the Organization’s commitment towards improving the health for all women.

We stand united in urgently requesting WHO’s deliberation body to move with dispatch in granting misoprostol EML status.

Yours sincerely,

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