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World

Efforts on Child-Appropriate Medicines Intensify

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Efforts to ensure children have better access to medicines appropriate for them have intensified with the unveiling of a new research and development agenda by the World Health Organization (WHO). The agenda targets a range of medicines – including antibiotics, asthma and pain medication – that need to be better tailored to children's needs. It calls for further research and development of combination pills for HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria, as well as appropriate child therapy for a number of neglected tropical diseases.

In industrialized societies more than half of the children are prescribed medicines dosed for adults and not authorized for use in children. In developing countries, the problem is compounded by lower access to medicines.

WHO has already begun work to promote increased attention to research into children's medicines. The agency is building an Internet portal to clinical trials carried out in children and will publish the web site containing that information early next year. WHO has also released the first international List of Essential Medicines for Children. The list contains 206 medicines that are deemed safe for children and address priority conditions.

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