

Vital Strategies Position Statement: Working with the pharmaceutical industry

At Vital Strategies, our work to accelerate progress on the world's most pressing health issues is made possible through the financial generosity of many donors and collaboration with valued partners. Most funding for our work comes from charitable foundations and government funding and most of our partners are governments and civil society organizations. We actively avoid working with corporate partners where there is a clear conflict of interest with public health. Therefore, we do not accept any funds from tobacco, weapons, alcohol, and sugary drinks companies. We do enter into corporate relationships with the pharmaceutical industry if and only if there is a strategic rationale and a good organizational fit. Currently, such agreements represent a little over a tenth of our annual funding.

Vital Strategies is committed to improving people's lives by increasing the use of cost-effective, evidence-based interventions that improve public health. We work with and accept support from pharmaceutical companies where it helps us to deliver on our mission. Our focus is prevention as well as supporting people living with communicable and non-communicable diseases. It is not our intention to improve the business or financial results of specific pharmaceutical companies, although we accept that may be an incidental outcome of an increase in demand for specific drug treatments that prove successful in clinical trials or are recommended for disease control and prevention.

We are vigilant in protecting our organization, the integrity of our work, our independence and reputation, the reputations of our donors and partners, and the well-being of people across the world. We carefully map out and agree on the specific parameters for every program with this in mind, with clear guidelines to ensure transparency and impartiality. We seek to work with reputable, established companies that have a successful track record and a real, proven commitment to ethical practices and safeguarding patients. Our focus is on helping to improve public health in low- and middle-income countries, and, as such, we avoid working with companies prioritizing high-income markets that seek to exploit a lack of competition in low- and middle-income countries. Increasing access to effective and affordable medicines is a primary objective in global health, and one which we fully support.

Example

Where our skills, objectives and values do align – such as our relationship with Janssen Research & Development LLC – collaboration has the potential to deliver real benefits to public health. Janssen – in conjunction with USAID, the UK Medical Research Council and the UK Department for International Development (DIFD) – funds the STREAM clinical trial. While USAID is the largest funder, Janssen's financial contribution is an important component of the trial and is distributed across all implementing partners (including Vital Strategies). STREAM is the first large-scale, multi-country clinical trial in the world to evaluate shortened treatment regimens for the growing threat of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB). This is an important contribution to a comparatively under-resourced field of work where the burden is greatest in low- and middle-income countries. The study hopes to provide robust new evidence on the effectiveness of shortened treatment regimens for MDR-TB, and the findings will be used to inform MDR-TB treatment recommendations from global technical agencies such as WHO and national TB programs. If these treatment regimens do prove successful, this partnership will help to reduce the global burden of MDR-TB.

More information on our work on the STREAM trial is available [here](#) and further details of our full portfolio of activities and partnerships is available [here](#).

José Luis Castro, President and CEO, Vital Strategies

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