

Lend Lease: A Creative Program to Provide Hemophilia Care in Albania

Louis M Aledort*

¹Icahn School of Medicine, 1 Gustave Levy Place, New York, NY 10029, USA

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***Corresponding author:** Louis M. Aledort, Professor Medicine, Icahn School of Medicine, 1 Gustave Levy Place, New York, NY 10029, Telephone: 212-241-7971, Fax: 212-987-3326; Email: louis.aledort@mountsinai.org

It has been recognized for some time that the majority of persons with hemophilia do not have access to the biologics that replace their missing factors. Some more fortunate countries have lowered the price of factors by paying a fractionator to produce concentrate from plasma the country has made available. Some impoverished countries are the recipient of donated final product, which is time limited and thus cannot be sustained. Even in some of these settings, middlemen have added a cost to the patient.

A unique program has been initiated in Italy. Tuscany has a high rate of Albanians who have settled in the country. Albania is one of the many countries which have not yet fully committed, nor do they have yet allocated or available, sufficient funds to adequately support treatment of their hemophilia patients. In a rare altruistic fashion, the Albanian population in Tuscany has developed a symbiotic relationship with the Association of Blood Donors of Italy (AVIS) in the region thus contributing to the need for plasma used to produce plasma derived products. One of the products, a FVIII concentrate, is presently in excess to the local needs therefore the region made part of it available for use in Albania through an 'ad hoc' program lasting three years 2013 -2016. A recent Italian law encourages excess available factors to be sent to other countries. The cost borne by the Tuscans is 9 cents/1.v. for the 6 million units totally shipped. The program in Tuscany is being carried out in Tirana, Albania at the Mother Teresa Hospital and in Florence, Italy at Meyer Children's Hospital. This program is being carried out through the International Health Cooperation

of Tuscany. Kedrion S.p.A (Barga, ITALY) helped the program by sustaining the cost of shipping for 3 million IU. Now it is hoped that the Albanian government will be able to afford to support a similar program, the World Federation of Hemophilia and Italian National Blood Centre for a Sustainable Supply for Haemophilia patients (Project WISH), on their own for a longer time of 5 years with the Tuscany region. The program will also include a part that is totally dedicated to train the haemophilia treaters and to help the local center in achieving improved patient treatment, and better outcomes.

This unique program combines altruism, a commitment from a biologic manufacturer, and a country unable to support hemophilia care. It is hoped that with time and the recognition in Albania of the benefits to their patients and societal productivity resulting from this program, that they may well bear the costs through their healthcare budget. Industry should take note that with local philanthropy and financial support from a biologic industry one can achieve improved healthcare. Donating product alone without working with developing countries will not achieve the ultimate goal of having a country make hemophilia a healthcare priority.

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