

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### DDTD Releases First Commercial Blood Test for Disease Loiasis Caused by 'African Eye Worm'

#### *Results to Help Optimize Mass Administration of Deworming Drug Mectizan®*

**SAN DIEGO – May 18, 2017** – [Drugs & Diagnostics for Tropical Diseases \(DDTD\)](#), a non-profit (501c3) research organization discovering new treatments and diagnostics for neglected diseases, has developed and begun manufacturing the [Loa Antibody Rapid Test](#), the first serological test to detect the tropical disease [Loiasis](#). The disease results from the exposure to *Loa loa* (*L. loa*), a parasitic worm – also known as African eye worm – that affects more than 10 million people living in sub-Saharan Africa.

DDTD specifically developed the new Loa Antibody Rapid Test to assist the World Health Organization (WHO) and its affiliates to refine current maps of *L. loa*, and to determine optimal mass drug administration of 600 million doses of [Mectizan®](#) manufactured and donated by Merck & Co, Inc. Mectizan is a treatment for onchocerciasis (commonly known as river blindness) and lymphatic filariasis (commonly known as elephantiasis), but can cause serious neurological adverse events and be lethal in individuals co-infected with *L. loa*. As a result, areas that are co-endemic with *L. loa* must be excluded from Mectizan-based interventions.

DDTD optimized the Loa Antibody Rapid Test for use in low resource regions affected by making it affordable at less than \$2 per test, simple to use, and stable under extreme temperatures. Additionally, it does not require sample processing. The test requires only a drop of capillary blood collected by finger prick and is complete in fewer than 20 minutes. A companion smartphone-based reader is used to capture test results and tracks GPS coordinates for real-time mapping of the disease.

DDTD Founder and President Marco Biamonte, PhD, commented, “Loiasis is a highly neglected tropical disease, and there is growing evidence that it is associated with renal, cardiac, and neurological problems and with a shorter life expectancy. Further, *L. loa* presents a major obstacle to international efforts aimed at controlling river blindness and elephantiasis. The time has arrived for us to intervene.”

The Loa Antibody Rapid Test is based on the detection of antibodies to the parasite antigen SXP-1, which was identified by scientists at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). NIAID also evaluated the Loa Antibody Rapid Test with samples from patients infected with *L. loa* and other parasitic worms, as well as from uninfected individuals. When read with the naked eye, the test is 94 percent sensitive for *L. loa* infection, 100 percent specific when compared to healthy controls, and 82–100 percent specific when individuals infected with other worms are used as comparators.

The Loa Antibody Rapid Test is initially available for Research Use Only (RUO), with regulatory compliance in disease endemic countries to follow. San Diego-based philanthropists, the Wellcome Trust, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) generously funded DDTD's research and development of the test.

### **About DDTD**

Established in 2011, [Drugs and Diagnostics for Tropical Diseases \(DDTD\)](http://www.ddtd.org) is a U.S.-based non-profit (501c3) research organization with the mission to discover new treatments and diagnostics for neglected tropical diseases that affect predominantly impoverished populations. DDTD is developing easy to use, rapid, inexpensive diagnostics to specifically detect infections associated with loiasis, lymphatic filariasis, and river blindness, and is also leading a drug discovery effort for Dengue Fever. Learn more and get involved by donating or supporting DDTD's mission, and by visiting <http://www.ddtd.org>.

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