

Hopitaux universitaires Geneve (Olivia Heller, Mathieu Demont, David Beran)-individual expert-Canada-Session

Additional information Canada

2021 marked a significant milestone for Canada in that a discovery at the University of Toronto revolutionised the management of Type 1 diabetes. The discovery of insulin by Banting and Best changed Type 1 diabetes from a death sentence to a manageable chronic condition. In 2022 we celebrate the centenary of insulin's first use in Leonard Thompson a Canadian child.

Today, it is estimated that 9 million people are living with type 1 diabetes. This autoimmune disease, generally diagnosed before the age 35 years old, requires people living with this condition to have daily injections of insulin for survival. Without such injections, people will die in a matter of days.

Regrettably, 100 years after its discovery, insulin still fails to reach all those who need it for their survival. Indeed, from a global perspective, the most common cause of death for a child living with type 1 diabetes is the lack of access to insulin. Many barriers exist, but the main ones are the price of insulin as well as its availability. The global insulin market is dominated by three multi-nationals. They together share 96% of the insulin volume market worldwide. While the cost of production of insulin rarely exceeds 3 USD, the median price that a patient is required to pay in the public sector is of 31 USD and can reach up to 112 USD.

States Parties of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, nevertheless recognise, under article 6, that every child has the inherent right to life and they are required to ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child. Moreover, the Committee on the Rights of the Child highlighted that a number of determinants need to be considered for the full realization of children's right to health (Article 24), which includes individual factors such as socioeconomic status. Article 6 of the CRC therefore needs to be understood as providing the umbrella protection for survival and development of the child. Additionally, the Committee on the Rights of the Child claimed that States parties to the Convention not only have obligations to implement children's right to health within their own jurisdiction, but also to contribute to global implementation through international cooperation, paying particular attention to the children's health priorities among the poorest parts of the population and in developing States.

Over 100 years after the insulin's discovery, Governments should not merely accept that the lack of availability of insulin nor its unaffordable price results in the death of numerous children living with Type 1 diabetes. Solutions do exist to guarantee the survival of persons living with this autoimmune disease and have even already been implemented in several countries, including some that are very challenged economically. States Parties have legal obligations to ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival of children and, as these solutions do not require insurmountable efforts to be put in place and are able to save many lives, they cannot legitimately use excuses to justify limitations on their efforts. States should therefore take the necessary steps to respect their obligations and thus guarantee the rights of all children.

Insulin was discovered in Canada 100 years ago, and the scientists who discovered it refused to profit from their discovery and sold the patent for just one dollar. Could, the Government of Canada, provide information on the steps taken to ensure access to this vital treatment for people living with Type 1 diabetes for all children living in its territories?

In addition, could it please indicate what steps have been taken to promote access to insulin worldwide and to pursue the gesture of solidarity initiated by Canadian scientists?