GRAD 700R: University Course
Spring Semester 2014

OFFERED: Monday 3-6pm

The Commercial Neglect of Treatable Disease: A Global Health Perspective on Neglected Disease and Drug Development

Faculty
Steve Culler, PhD – Rollins School of Public Health, Goizueta Business School
Timothy Holbrook, JD – School of Law
Dennis Liotta, PhD – Chemistry Department
George Painter, PhD – School of Medicine (Pharmacology)
Michael Sacks, PhD – Goizueta Business School
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Course Overview
This course will provide a comprehensive overview of the state of commercially-neglected diseases in the context of global health. It will provide perspective on the roles played by the pharmaceutical industry, universities, and scientists in addressing the medical needs of the developing world, including the ethical challenges faced by each player. Additionally, the course will discuss the various components of drug discovery and development as they relate to neglected diseases and, using a multidisciplinary approach, will delve into the science, business, ethics, and law in this area. The course will introduce students to the fundamentals in this expansive field and challenge them to think across disciplines to develop broad-based solutions to this critical problem.

There is an immediate need to address the issue of commercially-neglected diseases, particularly the therapeutic treatments of conditions such as tuberculosis and malaria. Pharmaceutical companies, historically the traditional avenue for drug development, face intense pressure to deliver financial returns. As a result, these entities are unable to invest heavily in low-profit endeavors such as treatments for neglected diseases. Academic institutions, with different missions and incentive structures, have begun to fill a role in the continuum of drug discovery and development. The interaction between universities and for-profit companies is evolving and one of many challenges we face as we endeavor to address this issue that impacts so many lives in the developing world.

This course will answer several key questions:
- How is the development of medicines for neglected diseases impacted by the current approach to innovation and development?
- How does a drug evolve from the bench to the bedside?
- How do incentives impact the role of universities and pharmaceutical companies in neglected disease and drug development?
- What is the business of drug discovery and development for neglected diseases?
- How do patent law and licensing promote or stifle innovation in this space?
- From an ethical standpoint, what responsibility do various constituencies have to address these issues?

The course will culminate in a capstone project in which students will work in groups to develop a comprehensive proposal to address the issues discussed in class. Examples include developing an alternative funding source for drug development or creating a new approach for purchasing and delivering drugs to those in need.