The G20 leaders and the Argentinian presidency should be commended for their unprecedented reaffirmation of the importance of investing in early childhood development and for placing it at the top of their 2018 agenda with the G20 Early Childhood Development Initiative. This recognition that the first 1,000 days of a child’s life are crucial for mental and physical development, and a precondition for reaching their full potential, will be vital to breaking the cycle of structural poverty and inequality and thereby helping achieve several of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Millions of children continue to die or suffer from permanent disabilities each year, either because their diseases are not diagnosed or because the appropriate treatment is not accessible or does not exist. This poses a largely unanswered dilemma to the development community.

Malaria is a case in point. There has been enormous progress in the fight against malaria in recent years, with the number of paediatric deaths dropping by 35% between 2010 and 2016. However, in 2016, the disease still took the lives of more than 300,000 children under five years of age. To add to these alarming statistics, children who survive malaria must often cope with lifelong consequences, including neurological and cognitive impairment that affects their educational attainment and future potential.

Political decision makers, drug regulators, health services, families and other caregivers need to be made better aware that medicines designed for adults, when administered to children, can result in underdosing or overdosing, with detrimental effects including toxicity, under-treatment and generation of drug-resistant pathogens. The general lack of age-appropriate formulations of essential life-saving medicines means that suboptimal treatment is all too frequent. In May this year, an event at the World Health Assembly addressed these challenges and informed the international community about the transformative role played by child-friendly treatments in the survival and healthy development of underserved children.¹

Dr David Reddy, PhD, is CEO of Medicines for Malaria Venture. This not-for-profit research foundation discovers, develops and facilitates access to new, effective and affordable malaria medicines in collaboration with a global network of partners. With these partners, MMV has brought forward eight new antimalarial drugs that have saved an estimated 1.5 million lives, and has broadened its malaria drug pipeline to include 10 novel compounds in clinical development. MMV is guided by a board and donor-approved five-year strategy to develop and deliver new antimalarials to meet the needs of vulnerable populations suffering from malaria.

¹Organised by Medicines for Malaria Venture, the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and Unitaid.
Medicines for Malaria Venture and partners have developed and delivered new medicines for malaria that have **saved the lives** of more than **1.5 million** people.