



You might be surprised to learn that the number one illness that kills children is not aids or malaria, nor is it diarrhea. The culprit is pneumonia, and it's the single largest cause of death among children under 5.

Described by Sir William Osler, a father of the modern medicine, as "the captain of the men of death", pneumonia is an inflammatory of the lung, affecting primarily the microscopic air sacs known as alveoli. It is usually caused by infection or other conditions such as autoimmune diseases. A common disease throughout human history, the symptoms were described already by Hippocrates (460 BC – 370 BC).

In 2012, 1.1 million children under five died from pneumonia. The majority of those children were under 2 years old. The impact of pneumonia is worst among the poorest and most marginalized.

Every year on 12 November, [World Pneumonia Day](#) is marked across the globe to raise

awareness about pneumonia; promote interventions to protect against, prevent and treat pneumonia; and generate action to combat pneumonia.

This year World Pneumonia Day will focus on innovation – highlighting innovative solutions to end childhood pneumonia, while at the same time emphasizing that there are, in fact, existing simple interventions that only need to reach the most vulnerable children.

Pneumonia is one of the most solvable global health issues- and yet a child dies from the infection every 20 seconds. More than 99 percent of deaths from pneumonia occur in the developing world, where access to health care facilities and treatment is often out of reach.

One reason that so many children die is that families and healthcare providers simply do not have the information and tools necessary to diagnose and treat pneumonia effectively.

Pneumonia cannot be addressed in a vacuum, but only through integrated efforts to combat diarrhea and other diseases simultaneously, as there is a clear link between pneumonia and diarrhoea. Without coordinated efforts, each year more than two million children will die as a result of pneumonia and diarrhea.