



News digest 3  
Q3, 2004

Dear partners, friends, and colleagues,

We hope you will be interested in the following news digest from the Meningitis Vaccine Project (MVP). Its purpose is to let you know about recent, current, and upcoming activities at MVP. We welcome your comments and suggestions at [info@meningvax.org](mailto:info@meningvax.org) and encourage you to forward this update to friends or colleagues who might be interested in learning about MVP's progress.

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### **Vaccine Development Activities**

- On September 16-17, MVP convened an international panel composed of meningitis, vaccine, and clinical development experts and representatives from African clinical sites in Washington, DC, to review the project's clinical strategy for the meningococcal A conjugate candidate vaccine (Men A conjugate vaccine). During the meeting, MVP director Dr. F. Marc LaForce outlined the clinical plans for phases I, II, and III of the studies, and he described the MVP regulatory strategy to license the vaccine in India and obtain World Health Organization (WHO) prequalification. While recommending changes that strengthen the plans, the clinical advisory panel determined that the strategies presented were sound and that clinical data resulting from the plans would effectively demonstrate safety and efficacy of the Men A conjugate vaccine.
- PATH signed a contract with INTOX Pvt. Ltd., an Indian company that performs preclinical tolerance and toxicology testing services.

### **Clinical Activities**

- Three sites were selected for the phase I trials in India.
- A follow-up visit was made to a potential site in the Gambia.
- An evaluation visit was made to a potential clinical testing site in Mali. So far, the MVP clinical team has visited ten potential trial sites in Africa.

### **Surveillance Activities**

- The Multi-Disease Surveillance and Control (MDSC) team based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, visited Mali, Niger, and Chad with the goal of following up the implementation of enhanced meningitis surveillance activities in these countries. As of September 23, the MDSC team had provided supportive visits to 7 out of the 13 countries under enhanced meningitis surveillance. During these visits, the team assessed the status of implementation of standard operating procedures and meningitis epidemic preparedness and response plan of action; it provided support to national surveillance units and national reference laboratories; and it installed and provided training on software and tools for integrated disease surveillance, including lab program and mapping (health mapper).

- Surveillance data from country reports were compiled and analysed, and a meningitis weekly feedback bulletin was prepared.
- The fourth annual meeting on enhanced surveillance of meningitis disease in Africa took place on September 28-29 in Ouagadougou with the objective of assessing the progress made during the 2003-2004 epidemic season and preparing plans of action and recommendations to be implemented during the 2004-2005 season.
- The MDSC microbiology laboratory is now functional and can start receiving samples from countries during the next meningitis season.

### **Epidemiological Research**

- Preliminary results on the documentation of meningococcal vaccine use in African countries during the last 5 to 10 years were presented at a symposium on meningococcal vaccine strategies in Africa, organized during the XI<sup>e</sup> Actualités du Pharo, Marseille, France, on September 9-11, by the Institut de Médecine Tropicale, Service de Santé des Armées, a WHO Collaborating Centre for Research on Meningococci. Data are currently being consolidated and joint country reports (WHO/ministries of health) are being prepared for Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Sudan, and Chad.

### **Communication and Vaccine Introduction Strategy**

- MVP participated in or made presentations at the following meetings:
  - United States Agency for International Development briefing, Washington, DC, August 17.
  - 14<sup>th</sup> International Pathogenic Neisseria Conference, Milwaukee, U.S.A., September 5-10.
  - XI<sup>e</sup> Actualités du Pharo, Marseille, France, September 9-11. The MVP surveillance team presented results from the 2003-2004 epidemic season.
  - Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization seminar on development and deployment of vaccines against poverty-related diseases, Bergen, Norway, September 20-21.
- MVP in the news:
  - "New meningitis vaccine in the pipeline," by Dr. Sanjit Bagchi for *Science in Africa*. Available at <http://www.sciencein africa.co.za/2004/july/meningitis.htm>.
  - "Bulles d'espoir" (in French), by Dr. Monique Berlier for *La Libre Essentielle* on the occasion of World Deafness Day on September 25. Available at <http://www.lalibreessentielle.be/n65/sante.pdf>.

### **Recent Hires**

- Dr. Anny Fetter assumed leadership of the MVP's vaccine development arm on August 31. For a short biography of Dr. Fetter, please visit <http://www.meningvax.org/team.htm#major>.
- Mrs. Carol Rodocanachi joined MVP in September to provide administrative assistance to the WHO vaccine introduction manager and the WHO/MVP team. For a short biography of Mrs. Rodocanachi, please visit <http://www.meningvax.org/team.htm#major>.

That's all for now from the MVP team. Stay tuned for our next news digest (due January 2005). We look forward to receiving your comments at [info@meningvax.org](mailto:info@meningvax.org).

Created in 2001, MVP is a partnership between the WHO and PATH. The mission of MVP is to eliminate epidemic meningitis as a public health problem in sub-Saharan Africa through the development, testing, introduction, and widespread use of conjugate meningococcal vaccines.

For more information on MVP, please visit our website at <http://www.meningvax.org>