



News digest 11
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Dear partners, friends, and colleagues,

The following is a summary of recent, current, and upcoming activities at the Meningitis Vaccine Project (MVP). We welcome your comments and suggestions at info@meningvax.org and encourage you to forward this update to friends or colleagues who might be interested in learning about MVP's progress.

If you wish not to receive this update, simply reply to this email, changing the subject to "unsubscribe MVP news digest."

Vaccine Development Activities

- Serum Institute of India (SIIL) is preparing for the development of consistency lots of the new meningococcal A conjugate (MenA conjugate) vaccine in their new facility in Pune.

Clinical Activities

- One-year follow-up data from the Phase 1 clinical study in India show that the MenA conjugate vaccine is safe and immunogenic. Data also show that antibody persistence in Indian adults immunized with the MenA conjugate vaccine is of a longer duration than that obtained with meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine.
- On December 1, Phase 1 investigators gathered at iGATE Clinical Research International's (iGATE CRI) office in Mumbai, India, for an end-of-study (PsA-TT-001) investigator meeting. Dr. Prasad Kulkarni from SIIL and Dr. F. Marc LaForce from MVP attended the meeting, which provided an opportunity to present Phase 1 results and share experiences from the three study sites. iGATE CRI is a contract research organization that performs data management and clinical trial monitoring services for MVP clinical studies.
- Phase 2 enrollment has been completed at the Center for Vaccine Development-Mali and at the Medical Research Council in The Gambia. The study is ongoing, and a preliminary report on safety and immunogenicity should be available in the second quarter of 2007.
- On December 12–13, members of the MVP clinical team participated in PATH's first in-house conference on clinical trials and clinical research. Featured topics included "Clinical Development Strategy" (Dr. Simonetta Viviani) and "Working With Multiple Institutional Review Boards: the MVP/World Health Organization (WHO) Collaboration" (Dr. Elisa Marchetti). Preconference workshops included a session on good clinical practice, a session on finance and budgeting for clinical trials, and an overview of clinical trials from start to finish. Nearly 70 PATH employees from four offices participated in the conference.
- The MVP clinical team is preparing the documents for future clinical studies to be performed in the African meningitis belt and in India.

Surveillance and Epidemic Preparedness Activities

- The fifth meeting on enhanced surveillance of meningitis disease in Africa took place on October 17–19 in Bamako, Mali, with the objective of assessing the progress made during the 2005–2006 epidemic season and preparing plans of action and recommendations to be implemented during the 2006–2007 season.
- On December 7–8, the WHO Multi-Disease Surveillance Center (MDSC) team in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, participated in the annual retreat of the Burkinabè Ministry of

Health in Ouahigouya. During the retreat, MDSC staff revised the national plan for enhanced meningitis surveillance activities for 2006–2007 and prepared plans of action and recommendations to be implemented during the 2006–2007 season.

- The MDSC team assessed Burkina Faso's response to the epidemic that affected 34 of the country's 59 districts on September 10–30, 2006. Twelve districts from five regions were visited. The MDSC team concluded that good epidemiological surveillance allowed timely reporting and notification of epidemics (98 percent timeliness and 100 percent completeness). A considerable number of cerebrospinal fluid samples were sent from health centers to district and regional laboratories, allowing satisfactory laboratory confirmation of epidemics, in spite of less exhaustive feedback. Thanks to efforts in case management, case fatality rate was the lowest in the last ten years (8.7 percent). Lack of vaccine security stock at the beginning of the epidemic season handicapped the timeliness of the reactive vaccination campaigns. Furthermore, a vaccine shortage towards the end of the epidemic season did not allow vaccination in two of the districts visited.
- The International Coordinating Group on vaccine provision for epidemic meningitis control (ICG—the group that coordinates the distribution of available polysaccharide vaccine) prepared for the next epidemic seasons. WHO Epidemic and Pandemic Alert and Response and ICG fear that a new epidemic wave may threaten sub-Saharan Africa, considering the increasing trend in the number of meningococcal meningitis cases in 2006. The group is currently collaborating with existing vaccine suppliers to increase vaccine availability in 2007–2009. It is also working with other vaccine manufacturers to produce and prequalify affordable meningococcal AC/ACWY polysaccharide vaccine for Africa so that, unlike in 2006 when there was a vaccine shortage, there will be enough meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine available in the coming years.
- Dr. Kader Kondé, the WHO/MVP focal point, has been named interim director of the MDSC.

Vaccine Introduction Strategy and Communication

- At the end of October, MVP held its annual strategic planning workshop for the first time in Africa and drafted the project strategic plan for 2007–2011. Three days of site visits and work sessions in Ouagadougou culminated in a reception hosted by the Burkinabè Ministry of Health. Attendees included PATH president, Dr. Christopher Elias; WHO representative, Dr. Baba-Moussa; and the secretary general of the ministry of health, Dr. Ouanga, who gave a moving speech about the devastating impact of annual meningitis epidemics in the country. On the final day of the visit, Drs. LaForce, Elias, and Kondé met with Ms. Jeanine Jackson, the US ambassador to Burkina Faso, and His Excellency Blaise Compaoré, the President of Burkina Faso. Both offered to help support the MVP efforts in the country, and President Compaore reconfirmed his commitment to serve as patron of the Stop Meningitis Epidemics Initiative with other heads of state in the African meningitis belt.
- Dr. Richard Adegbola, an expert in medical biology and pneumococcal disease, is the fifth interviewee in a series of interviews with Project Advisory Group members. To read what he has to say on MVP and how the MVP approach could be used for developing other meningitis vaccines for Africa, click on this link: <http://www.meningvax.org/files/PAG-interviews-Pr-R-Adegbola-Nov-2006.pdf>.

That's all for now from the MVP team. Stay tuned for our next news digest in three months' time.

We look forward to receiving your comments at info@meningvax.org.

Created in 2001, the Meningitis Vaccine Project is a partnership between 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>.