



News digest 1  
Q1, 2004

Dear partners, friends, and colleagues,

We hope you will be interested in the following news digest from the Meningitis Vaccine Project. 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 and regulatory activities**

- MVP is supporting two parallel conjugation processes for the development of a meningococcal group A conjugate vaccine. The two parties currently involved in vaccine development will present their data to a panel of experts in June 2004 and it is expected that a final decision will be made in early summer.
- MVP entered into a letter of intent with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop and perform serological assays. The assays will be used to evaluate immune and functional antibody responses induced by the immunization of clinical trial participants with the MVP group A meningococcal conjugate vaccine.

#### **Surveillance activities**

- The Standard Operating Procedures for the implementation of Enhanced surveillance of Meningococcal Disease (EMD) in countries of the meningitis belt went through final review in early 2004 and are currently being finalized.
- An epidemiologist and a data manager have been identified to reinforce the EMD regional team in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Epidemiologist recruitment is being finalized.
- The surveillance team is currently receiving data from nine countries. This is a real success due to the hard work and dedication of Dr. Kandolo's surveillance team in Ouagadougou. The timeliness and completeness of data reported also kept improving during the first quarter of 2004.
- Laboratory supplies for pre-positioning at country level were distributed to ten countries of the meningitis belt. The supplies will be used to collect samples for bacteriological confirmation of meningococcal strains in these countries.

#### **Epidemiological research**

- Between January and March 2004, the MVP epidemiologist made country visits to Niger, Sudan, and Côte d'Ivoire in addition to visiting the WHO/meningitis collaborating centre in Oslo, Norway.

- Report of past vaccine use in Niger and Sudan is in progress in collaboration with Ministry of Health experts. Information on Côte d'Ivoire vaccination experience is expected soon.
- Strain database is finalized in consultation with WHO/meningitis collaborating centre in Oslo. The database is updated with all information from this centre since 1991.
- Preliminary discussions were held and work has begun with the WHO/Geographic Information System team to link the review database with the Global Atlas.
- Areas for collaboration with WHO/West African Block are defined.

### **Clinical activities**

- The MVP clinical team finalized the clinical development plan for the 1-29 year olds. The plan will be submitted to the concerned regulatory authorities for obtaining an authorization that will enable MVP to conduct phase I clinical trials.
- The MVP clinical team strengthened its relationships with institutions that will play a key role in the clinical trials, including iGATE Clinical Research International (iCRI).

### **Communication and introduction strategy**

- Dr. Kader Konde, MVP's focal point at the World Health Organization, joined the MVP team April 1, 2004. Dr. Konde will lead the MVP vaccine introduction strategy, establishing a strong network with African officials, public health authorities, and practitioners who will implement and budget for vaccine introduction at the national and local levels. For a short biography of Dr. Konde, please visit <http://www.meningvax.org/team.htm>
- MVP at past meetings and events:
  - Société de Pathologie Exotique, Vaccinologie Tropicale, Institut Pasteur, Paris, France, February 11. MVP director F. Marc LaForce talked about "Vaccination strategies against meningococcal meningitis in tropical Africa"
  - Project Advisory Group meeting, Harare, Zimbabwe, April 6-7.
- MVP at upcoming events and conferences:
  - Technical meeting on intellectual property and vaccines, Geneva, Switzerland, April 19-20. MVP will talk on "Intellectual Property Rights and Vaccines for Developing Countries"
  - Fourth International Symposium on Pneumococci and Pneumococcal Diseases, Helsinki, Finland, May 9-13
  - Initiative for Vaccine Research (IVR), Global Vaccine Research Forum, Montreux, Switzerland, June 8-10 (please see [http://www.who.int/vaccine\\_research/en/](http://www.who.int/vaccine_research/en/) for additional information on vaccine research at WHO)
  - Expert Panel Meeting, Ferney-Voltaire, France, June 2004

That's all for now from the MVP team. Stay tuned for our next news digest (due July 2004). We look forward to receiving your comments at [info@meningvax.org](mailto:info@meningvax.org)

Created in 2001, the Meningitis Vaccine Project is a partnership between the World Health Organization (WHO) and Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (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>