



News digest 14  
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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](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 26–27, MVP convened a pharmaceutical meeting at the PATH office in Ferney-Voltaire, France, to review and discuss the strategic plan for vaccine licensure and production. Participants included pharmaceutical and regulatory teams from Serum Institute of India Limited (SIIL) and MVP and MVP scientific advisers, including Drs. Costante Ceccarini, Jean Pêtre, Graciela Spizzamiglio, and Neil Ravenscroft. On September 28, participants took part in a scavenger hunt in the medieval city of Yvoire, Switzerland, as part of a team-building activity.
- Ongoing stability studies conducted at SIIL show that the meningococcal A (MenA) conjugate vaccine is stable for at least three years at temperatures between +2°C and +8°C.

### **Clinical Activities**

- The Phase 2 clinical study is ongoing at the Center for Vaccine Development-Mali (CVD-Mali) and at the Medical Research Council (MRC) clinical site in Basse, The Gambia. The study, which looks at safety and immunogenicity in 600 12- to 23-month-olds (the younger age group targeted by the mass vaccination campaigns) is going well.
- MVP launched the Phase 2/3 clinical study after obtaining all required ethical and regulatory clearances from concerned authorities. Enrollment of 1,240 2- to 29-year-olds (the older age group targeted by the mass vaccination campaigns) has been completed at the four clinical sites participating in the study—CVD-Mali, MRC, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement in Senegal, and Shirdi Sai Baba Rural Hospital in India. A preliminary report on safety and immunogenicity should be available in the second quarter of 2008.
- The clinical team is drafting the protocol for the next clinical study in Africa.
- MVP staff and partners made presentations at several conferences, including XIII<sup>e</sup> Actualités du Pharo, Marseille, France, September 6–8, and the Centenary conference of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, London, United Kingdom, September 13–15.
  - To view the communication made by Dr. Fadima Cheick Haidara, study coordinator at CVD-Mali, click on this link: [http://www.meningvax.org/files/Haidara\\_pharo\\_2007.pdf](http://www.meningvax.org/files/Haidara_pharo_2007.pdf).
  - To view the clinical poster presented by Dr. Brown Okoko, principal investigator at MRC, click on this link: <http://www.meningvax.org/files/Okoko-Phase2-Poster-Sept07.pdf>.
  - To view the pharmaceutical poster presented by Dr. Claire Mattick from the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control, click on this link: <http://www.meningvax.org/files/Pharma-Phase2-Poster-Sept07.pdf>.

### **Surveillance and Epidemic Preparedness Activities**

- Investigation of the potential factors causing reoccurring meningitis epidemics in Burkina Faso continues at the World Health Organization (WHO) Multi-Disease Surveillance Center

in Ouagadougou. Using detailed questionnaires developed by United States Agency for International Development consultants, investigators have collected data from 15 districts, 13 hospitals, and 4 directorates of the Burkina Faso Ministry of Health directly involved in epidemic control. The data will provide information on epidemic preparation and response during the 2007 epidemic in Burkina Faso.

- The study protocol for the assessment of the population-based vaccine coverage during mass immunization campaigns during the 2007 meningitis epidemic has been implemented in Fada N'Gourma and Ouargaye—two Burkina Faso districts with attack rates of respectively 233 and 535 per 100,000 inhabitants. The survey compares the vaccine coverage reported by health facilities during the mass campaigns against the true population-based vaccine coverage. It will be used to assess whether the campaigns were conducted as planned.

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

- On July 30, WHO and UNICEF hosted a first meeting at the MVP office to discuss the development of a GAVI investment case to support the introduction of meningococcal A containing conjugate vaccines. Participants included WHO staff from Geneva and the Regional Office for Africa who are involved in new vaccine introduction, UNICEF representatives from New York and Copenhagen, and MVP staff involved in vaccine introduction and funding efforts. The achievements of the meeting included agreement on the content of a draft GAVI investment case; agreement on the roles and responsibilities of WHO, UNICEF, and MVP; and consensus from WHO and UNICEF on strategies for introduction of meningococcal A containing conjugate vaccines in Africa. In addition, an important advocacy initiative was launched to request GAVI review of a meningococcal A containing conjugate vaccine investment case in spring 2008. This review would enable timely GAVI support to meningococcal A containing conjugate vaccines, given the rapid increase in meningitis outbreaks in Africa.
- The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation has committed US\$4 million to support the first introduction of the MenA conjugate vaccine in Burkina Faso at the end of 2008. The grant includes funds for strengthening vaccine delivery, waste management, and surveillance systems in Burkina Faso beginning in October 2007; purchase of vaccine and vaccine injection supplies in 2008; and compilation and dissemination of results and lessons learned in 2009 to support subsequent vaccine introduction in other meningitis belt countries. MVP is grateful for the support and confidence of the Dell Family Foundation in providing this important grant.
- On September 11–14, MVP staff involved in communication and vaccine introduction participated in a global health communications training workshop organized by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. During the workshop, MVP staff identified key components of the strategic communication plan that will be developed for the introduction of the MenA conjugate vaccine.
- The *Vaccine* supplement of September 3 is devoted to meningococcal meningitis in the African meningitis belt and contains several articles coauthored by MVP partners and staff, including Drs. Mamoudou Djingarey, Marie-Paule Kieny, Kader Konde, F. Marc LaForce, Marie-Pierre Préziosi, and Simonetta Viviani. Click [here](#) to access the table of contents.
- Professor Jeannine Tagliante-Saracino is the seventh interviewee in a series of interviews with Project Advisory Group members. To read what she has to say on MVP and introducing a new meningococcal vaccine in Africa, click on this link:  
<http://www.meningvax.org/files/PAG-interviews-Pr-J-Tagliante-Saracino-Feb-2007-EN.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](mailto: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>.