



News digest 35
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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.

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Vaccine introduction and communication activities

- More than 48 million people in Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan received MenAfriVac® in 2012. Developed through MVP and manufactured at Serum Institute of India Ltd (SIIL), MenAfriVac has reached more than 103 million people in ten African countries since its first nationwide introduction in Burkina Faso in December 2010.
- According to postcampaign evaluations, the highest and lowest administrative 2012 coverage rates were found in Benin (around 100%) and Nigeria (around 80%), where the states of Borno and Yobe did not perform up to expectations (50% and 32% administrative coverage rate respectively). Sokoto and Kano, the other two Nigerian states that introduced MenAfriVac in 2012 reached more than 95% of their target population, as planned. Administrative coverage rates in other introducing countries ranked between 93% (Chad) and 98% (Cameroon and Ghana).
- In consultation with the World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa (WHO AFRO), Ethiopia and The Gambia have been selected to introduce MenAfriVac in 2013. There will be a single vaccination campaign in The Gambia, while Ethiopia will introduce the vaccine over the next three years. Counting Nigeria and Sudan, which will continue vaccine rollout in additional at-risk states, some 50 million people should be vaccinated with MenAfriVac this year. MVP is working with the GAVI Alliance to ensure that sufficient funding is in place for the vaccination campaigns.

Surveillance and epidemic preparedness activities

- To date, there have been no reported cases of group A meningococcal meningitis among the 103 million individuals who received one dose of MenAfriVac in 2010–2012. Epidemiological surveillance is ongoing in all the countries that introduced MenAfriVac to further assess meningitis activity and vaccine effectiveness.
- With technical input from the WHO Intercountry Support Team (IST) team and WHO HQ, the Burkinabe Ministry of Health (MoH) started revising the meningitis outbreak response strategy that had until now been driven by the predominance group A meningococcus. Once finalized, the new guidelines will be shared with other meningitis belt countries that introduced MenAfriVac at large scale.
- The March 22, 2013, issue of the WHO *Weekly Epidemiological Record (WER)* is entirely devoted to meningococcal disease in Africa. Among the topics covered are the introduction of MenAfriVac, epidemiological surveillance in the meningitis belt, pathogen distribution and circulation, dynamics of W135, epidemic response, and future perspectives. Read the [WER](#).

Clinical activities

- The following seven clinical trials related to licensing and prequalification of MenAfriVac for use in 1- to 29-year olds and/or infants have been successfully completed:
 - Phase 1 [PsA-TT-001](#) study in India.
 - Phase 2 [PsA-TT-002](#) study in Mali and the Gambia.
 - Phase 2/3 [PsA-TT-003](#) study in Mali, Senegal, and the Gambia.
 - Phase 2/3 [PsA-TT-003a](#) study in India.
 - Phase 2 [PsA-TT-004](#) study in Ghana.
 - Phase 3 [PsA-TT-005](#) study in India.
 - Phase 3 [PsA-TT-006](#) study in Mali.

- The Data Safety Monitoring Board met in Accra, Ghana, on January 29–30 to review the MVP PsA-TT-004 and PsA-TT-007 clinical trials in Ghana and Mali. Following an in-depth review of the data the board found no safety concerns related to the meningococcal A conjugate vaccine.
- Following completion of the [PsA-TT-004](#) study in November 2012 at the Navrongo Health Research Centre (NHRC) in Ghana, principal investigator Dr. Abraham Hodgson convened a scientific meeting in Accra on January 31 to present an overview of MenAfriVac research and development, share preliminary study results, and update participants on vaccine introduction progress to date. Co-organized by NHRC, MVP, and the WHO Ghana country office, the meeting was attended by representatives from several institutions, including the Ghanaian MoH, all divisions of the Ghana Health Service (including the three northern regions that are part of the meningitis belt), the Ghanaian Food and Drugs Agency, Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, the University of Health and Allied Sciences, Navrongo War Memorial Hospital, Kitampo and Dodowa Research Centers, SIIL, Agence Africaine de Recherche en Santé Humaine, Axio Research, DiagnoSearch Life Sciences Pvt Ltd., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, GAVI, UNICEF, USAID, and MVP. Some 40 meeting participants then traveled to Navrongo to attend an informational meeting with community leaders on February 2. A series of similar meetings were organized in February to share study results with local communities and thank them for their participation and support.
- The antibody [persistence study](#) that measured immune persistence up to 5 years after receiving MenAfriVac is now completed. Study results are expected to be available soon.
- The [PsA-TT-007](#) study at Center for Vaccine Development-Mali is progressing well. This phase 3 clinical study evaluates the immunogenicity and safety of different schedules and formulations of the meningococcal A conjugate vaccine administered concomitantly with local EPI vaccines in 1,500 healthy infants and toddlers. Thanks to the strong commitment of CVD-Mali staff, MVP, and partners, no major delays have resulted from the political unrest in the country. The study is expected to be completed by summer 2013.
- On March 19–21, a serology workshop was held at the PATH office in Ferney-Voltaire, France, to discuss the scientific data to date, plan technical publications, and outline the work for the next couple of years. The meeting was attended by representatives from SIIL and DiagnoSearch; the clinical sites in Ghana, Mali, Senegal, and The Gambia; laboratories in Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the USA; and independent consultants.



Photo credit: Muriel Socquet, PATH

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>.