



News digest 31
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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

- In December 2011 Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria became the fourth, fifth, and sixth countries in the African meningitis belt to introduce MenAfriVac™ at large scale. In the three countries, the campaigns targeting 1–29 year olds were organized by the ministries of health in close collaboration with WHO, UNICEF, and other partners. Provisional campaign results are below.
 - Nigeria kicked off the 2011 MenAfriVac™ vaccination season on December 5 with an 11-day campaign targeting 5 northern federal states. Preliminary results show that more than 15 million people received the vaccine, with coverage rates averaging 93%. The highest coverage rate was observed in the 1–4 age group, while the lowest coverage rate was observed in the 15–29 age group.
 - One day after Nigeria, the Health Minister of Cameroon launched a 7-day MenAfriVac™ vaccination campaign in 2 regions totaling 43 health districts. More than 4 million people were vaccinated during the campaign and a 2-day mop-up exercise targeting the 15–29 age group. According to preliminary surveys, vaccine coverage rates averaged 100% with highest rate in the 1–4 age group (107%) and lowest rate in the 15–29 age group (96%).
 - On December 11, the President of Chad launched a 10-day vaccination campaign in the capital city N'Djamena and 2 neighboring regions. Like in Cameroon, 2 additional vaccination days were added to the original calendar to make up for low turnout in one of the 3 regions. Vaccination teams were deployed in front of mosques and churches, and with the help of Doctors Without Borders/Holland, the country succeeded in immunizing more than 1.8 million people. Preliminary surveys indicate that vaccine coverage rates averaged 101% with highest rate in the 1–4 age group (119%) and lowest rate in the 5–14 age group (94%).
- The three countries will conduct in-depth campaign evaluations in early 2012 to fine-tune these results and better prepare for the next introduction phase of MenAfriVac™ at the end of 2012.
- The last introduction phase of MenAfriVac™ in Mali and Niger took place November 10–20 and November 25–December 5 respectively, as originally planned.
 - With help from Doctors Without Borders, Mali successfully immunized more than 6 million Malians aged 1–29 years who had not been vaccinated during last year's campaigns. Vaccine coverage averaged 100%.
 - Niger immunized almost 7.5 million people. Vaccine coverage averaged 96%.
- To date an estimated 54.5 million people in Africa have been vaccinated with MenAfriVac™. No safety concerns have come to light among the vaccinated populations, including pregnant women.

Surveillance and epidemic preparedness activities

- Not a single case of group A meningococcal meningitis has been reported in the 19.5 million people who received one dose of MenAfriVac™ in 2010. Epidemiological surveillance is ongoing in the six countries that introduced MenAfriVac™ at large scale to further assess vaccine effectiveness.

Clinical activities

- The following six clinical trials related to licensing and prequalification of MenAfriVac™ for use in 1- to 29-year olds 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 2/3 [PsA-TT-005](#) study in India.
 - Phase 3 [PsA-TT-006](#) study in Mali.
- The Phase 2 [PsA-TT-004](#) study is on schedule. A total of 1,200 infants are enrolled in the study that investigates the safety and immunogenicity of different dosages and schedules of MenAfriVac™ when administered concomitantly with EPI vaccines. Conducted at the Navrongo Health Research Centre in Ghana, the study is scheduled for completion in early 2013.
 - A persistence study has started in Mali and The Gambia. Both sites are retracing individuals who participated in the PsA-TT-002 and PsA-TT003 clinical trials to measure immunogenicity up to 5 years after receiving MenAfriVac™. Final preparations are being made for the study to start in Senegal. Study results will be used to plan the timing of future national immunization campaigns with MenAfriVac™.
 - The investigator meeting for a new phase 3 clinical study was held in Bamako, Mali, in December. PsA-TT-007 will evaluate the immunogenicity and safety of different schedules and formulations of the meningococcal A conjugate vaccine administered concomitantly with local EPI vaccines in healthy infants and toddlers. Recruitment of 1,500 subjects is scheduled to start in early February.

In memoriam

MVP is sad to report the death of Dr. Pascal Arduin on January 1, 2012, after a sudden and brief illness. Dr. Arduin (standing at the center of the photograph below) was coinvestigator for the PsA-TT-003 trial in Senegal. We are deeply thankful for the contribution Dr. Arduin made to the development of MenAfriVac™. We fondly remember his creativity to always find solutions, his open mindedness, his availability to others, and his wonderful smile. Our thoughts are with his family.



Last but not least

Dr. F. Marc LaForce announced on December 20 that he will retire from his position as MVP director. He will remain in his role until a successor is found. The successful development of MenAfriVac™ and vaccine introduction last year in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger; and this year in Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria were the crowning achievement of 10 years of work dedicated to eliminating meningitis epidemics in sub-Saharan Africa. [Read the announcement](#). PATH is seeking a new director to lead the MVP project through at least 2013. [Read the announcement](#).

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>.