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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

- Vaccine stability studies conducted at Serum Institute of India Limited (SIIL) show that the meningococcal A (Men A) conjugate vaccine is compatible with World Health Organization (WHO) requirements.

### Clinical Activities

- Week 4 results from the pivotal Phase 2 clinical study show that the Men A conjugate vaccine is safe and highly immunogenic. [View the full press release](#). These encouraging results open the prospect to start the Phase 2/3 clinical study in India, Mali, Senegal, and The Gambia this summer.
- An investigators' meeting, including a workshop on good clinical practice in clinical trials, took place in Dakar, Senegal, on June 19–22. The meeting was organized by Agence Africaine de Recherche en Santé Humaine and was attended by staff from MVP, SIIL, and iGATE; international consultants; and clinical staff from the Center for Vaccine Development-Mali, the Medical Research Council in The Gambia, and Institut de Recherche pour le Développement in Senegal. iGATE Clinical Research International is a Mumbai-based contract research company that provides data management services for the clinical studies.

### Surveillance and Epidemic Preparedness Activities

- Surveillance data compiled at the WHO Multi-Disease Surveillance Centre (MDSC) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, between January 1 and May 6, 2007, showed 47,925 suspected cases of meningitis and 3,421 deaths in sub-Saharan African countries that are under enhanced meningitis surveillance. Once again, the hardest-hit country is Burkina Faso.
- The MSDC team provided support to the Burkina Faso Ministry of Health during the statutory meetings of the epidemic management committee, as well as for formative field supervision, investigation, and laboratory confirmation of the pathogen.
- The MDSC laboratories provided support to meningitis belt countries for the identification of pathogens through polymerase chain reaction, antibiotic sensitivity testing, and typing and subtyping.
- The MDSC team visited Benin, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Togo between March and June to monitor the implementation of standard operating procedures for enhanced meningitis surveillance; the system of data collection, collation, and reporting; and the laboratory confirmation of etiological agents, including the procedures for sample transportation from the field to the reference laboratories. Information was also given in all visited countries on

the status of the development of the new Men A conjugate vaccine. Data analysis and mapping refresher training was also conducted in Benin, Mali, and Togo.

- With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), MDSC was able to recruit two surveillance officers who are currently involved in the investigation of the potential factors causing reoccurring meningitis epidemics in Burkina Faso. The consultants have developed questionnaires and trained the investigators for field data collection. They have also developed a study protocol for the assessment of the population-based vaccine coverage during mass immunization campaigns in the course of the 2006 and 2007 meningitis epidemics in Burkina Faso. It is expected that the vaccine coverage study will help understand why some districts with high vaccine coverage last year surpassed the epidemic threshold again this year.
- Through the same USAID support, additional material and equipment have been purchased for MDSC laboratories. The WHO collaborating center in Oslo sent a consultant to Ouagadougou to support the MDSC laboratories. The consultant specifically assessed the laboratories and the preparation of Trans Isolate (TI) media for the conservation and transport of cerebrospinal fluid from peripheral health centers of the countries to the national reference laboratories. The consultant is expected to return to Ouagadougou for the installation of the TI production unit at MDSC. MDSC will thus become a hub for TI production for African meningitis belt countries.

### Vaccine Introduction Strategy and Communication

- The *Kill or Cure* documentary on meningococcal meningitis was broadcast June 8–13 on BBC World. Produced by Rockhopper TV, the film offers a poignant and revealing account of the devastating impact meningitis epidemics have on individuals, families, and communities, and it explains how the new vaccine offers the hope of eliminating epidemic meningitis as a public health problem in sub-Saharan Africa. The film (soon available on DVD) and additional information are available at <http://www.meningvax.org/files/video-meningitis-kill-or-cure.htm>.
- The MVP press release promoting Phase 2 clinical study results received broad media coverage around the world (Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Middle East, and North and South America). Major news agencies and print and online outlets covered the announcement, and several organizations, including United Nations Radio, Channel Africa, Radio France Internationale, Voice of America, and Voix de l'Allemagne broadcast stories after requesting interviews from MVP and WHO staff members.
- MVP worked in close collaboration with WHO's Health, Information, and Promotion office to organize a communicators' workshop in Dakar on May 9–12. About 30 professional health communicators and media representatives (audiovisual media, print media, and national languages) participated in the workshops, which provided information on a variety of topics including meningococcal meningitis, disease epidemiology, vaccine development and clinical trials, strategies and challenges of the MVP, and the strategic plan for the introduction of the Men A conjugate vaccine. Workshop participants wrote communication plans aimed at facilitating the conduct of the clinical trial in Senegal.

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>.