

Hilleman Laboratories signs MoU with NICED, ICMR to develop Shigella Vaccine

March 29th, 2017, New Delhi: Hilleman Laboratories, a joint-venture partnership between MSD and Wellcome Trust, today, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases (NICED), an ICMR organization for further development and commercialization of the Shigella vaccines and other enteric vaccines for diarrheal diseases. This agreement was signed as an effort of Hilleman's mission to make affordable vaccines for the developing world population.

Present at the press conference to announce the collaboration were Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Director General of ICMR and Secretary, Department of Health Research - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India; Dr Shanta Dutta, Director, NICED and Dr Davinder Gill, Chief Executive Officer, Hilleman Labs.

Addressing the press conference at the signing-in, Dr. Davinder Gill said, "Shigella is the second most fatal organism after Rotavirus that causes severe diarrhea in children with no approved vaccine available at this time. We are pleased at this opportunity to collaborate with NICED and jointly develop Shigella vaccine for a disease whose basic pathology is not yet properly understood. NICED comes with a variety of strengths in research and developing strategies for treatment, prevention and control of enteric infections. This will also be a strategic shift for Hilleman, since till now, our focus has been to optimise existing vaccines and address the gaps in low resource settings. We will now endeavour to develop an entirely new line of treatment and we look forward to jointly abating this fatal disease which threatens the Nation's health".

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan added by saying, "This is a step in a new direction. India has immense potential in clinical research, drug and device manufacturing and we would like to see more of these types of partnerships to happen within the country to realize the 'Make in India' dream. We are keen that ICMR becomes more collaborative and partners with organizations in this direction and mutually expand capacities through cross-functional partnerships".

Dr. Shanta Dutta said, "Vaccines are the most simple, powerful and cost-effective health intervention and an effective public health tool. Our association with Hilleman Labs is in alignment with NICED's mission to identify enteric infections, initiate appropriate multidisciplinary research and develop strategies for treatment, control and prevention of enteric infections. Till now Shigella infection was treated with antibiotics and currently there is no vaccine to prevent shigellosis. In view of the global emergence of multidrug resistant bugs, challenges in global drug discovery program; vaccines are the only effective tool to fight against the disease. Candidate vaccines against the infection have been developed and tested at NICED by using the in vitro animal models, which showed significant immune response and protection against the infection. We look forward at this as a strong partnership aspiring to unlock new knowledge behind the enteric disease like shigellosis and to come up with appropriate and effective preventive tool against this disease."

Shigellosis is one of the leading causes of death and casualties among under five children with bloody diarrhoea worldwide especially in low income developing countries of Africa and South Asia. According to the 2015 Global Burden of Disease report, diarrheal diseases were collectively responsible for 1.3 million deaths across all age groups around the world. Of these, 500,000 deaths were in children less than 5 years of age, a majority of them in India. Shigella alone resulted in 164,000 deaths in total, mostly in Africa and South Asia & India. To date, there are no approved vaccines for prevention of Shigella.

About Hilleman Laboratories

Hilleman Laboratories is a first-of-its-kind joint-venture partnership formed between MSD a global research-driven pharmaceutical organization and Wellcome Trust, a global charitable foundation dedicated to human and animal health by supporting the brightest minds. Hilleman Laboratories has been named after renowned scientist and father of modern vaccines Dr. Maurice Hilleman. His dedication to making a difference through the practical application of vaccine research and delivering vaccines to people in need forms the core mission of Hilleman Laboratories.

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Hilleman Laboratories aims to become a global voice for vaccine development and access for public health in the developing world. For further information, please visit: www.hillemanlabs.org