

New Opportunity for Pneumococcal Research in Developing Countries

Baltimore, April 15, 2004 - Today GAVI's PneumoADIP announced the launch of an innovative small grants program to fund activities to accelerate pneumococcal vaccination in low and middle income countries. This program will support research and other activities to increase knowledge about pneumococcal diseases, such as pneumonia and meningitis, and their prevention by vaccination. The program is unique in its emphasis on supporting activities of local investigators in low or middle income countries.

“Pneumococcal disease is serious, common and preventable by vaccination.” says Dr. Orin Levine, Executive Director of PneumoADIP “as more children die each year from pneumonia than from any other infectious disease – even more than from malaria or AIDS. Nearly all of these deaths occur in the world’s developing countries. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), pneumococcal pneumonia and meningitis are responsible for between 800 000 and one million child deaths each year – that makes pneumococcal disease as big a childhood killer as malaria.”

The PneumoADIP’s small grants program is designed to help individuals and institutions in developing countries increase knowledge on the potential health and economic impact of pneumococcal vaccination.

Appropriate projects for this initiative would include establishing the local health and/or economic burden of pneumococcal disease or collecting data on the most important strains circulating in an area. Grants can also support activities aimed at communicating local data to key decision-makers, assessing local attitudes and perceptions of pneumococcal disease and its consequences, or determining the economic rationale for vaccination.

“We are excited to provide this opportunity to support the many outstanding researchers in developing countries,” says Maria Deloria Knoll Director of research at PneumoADIP. “They frequently have great ideas but nowhere to go for funding them.”



PneumoADIP

The Pneumococcal Vaccines Accelerated Development and Introduction Plan, **PneumoADIP** is located at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and funded by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (**GAVI**) through its partner, the Vaccine Fund.

The mission of the PneumoADIP is to improve child survival and health by accelerating the evaluation of and access to new life-saving pneumococcal vaccines for the world's children. Currently the World Health Organization estimates that pneumococcal pneumonia and meningitis are responsible for ~800 000 child deaths each year – primarily among children in developing countries. Pneumococcal meningitis kills or disables up to ½ of all the children who get it, making it one of the most dangerous infections in childhood. Pneumococcal infections are preventable.

Safe and effective vaccines are available, but history shows that more than 20 years may pass before children in developing countries receive these vaccines routinely. A successful PneumoADIP will prevent hundreds of thousands of child deaths by shortening the time lag between the introduction of new pneumococcal vaccines in rich countries and their use in developing countries.

