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National Institute of Allergy
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NIAID and the Malaria Vaccine Initiative/PATH Sign Agreement to Accelerate Malaria Vaccine Research

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and the Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI) at PATH today announced they have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to speed development of malaria vaccines. The agreement opens the way for greater collaboration in malaria vaccine research between NIAID and MVI. Last year, PATH (Program for Appropriate Technology in Health), a Seattle-based, nonprofit organization, established MVI through a \$50-million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to help remove critical barriers to getting a safe and effective malaria vaccine into widespread use.

“This cooperative relationship is a model of how government can work with private organizations to invest in research that could save millions of lives,” says NIAID Director Anthony S. Fauci, M.D. “NIAID has a long-standing commitment to investigating the treatment and prevention of malaria, and we welcome this opportunity to advance efforts toward a malaria vaccine.”

Each year, malaria kills about 2 million people, mostly children—a child dies from malaria every 30 seconds. More than 300 million victims suffer crippling fevers and other health problems from the disease, which is caused by a parasite transmitted by mosquito bites. Malaria is an enormous public health burden in many developing countries, one that has worsened in recent decades as some strains of the malaria parasite have developed resistance to drug treatments and mosquitoes have become impervious to insecticides.

MVI, headquartered in Rockville, Maryland, seeks to accelerate the clinical development of promising malaria vaccine candidates by coordinating efforts with organizations such as NIAID. “The signing of this first MOU is a critical step in establishing a series of agreements that will allow MVI to have an impact on malaria vaccine research,” MVI Director Regina Rabinovich, M.D., says. “NIAID offers unparalleled clinical testing sites for malaria vaccines and a growing capability to manufacture sufficient quantities of vaccine for field-testing. Its broad capacity, partnered with MVI, will help

(more)

make malaria vaccines available and accessible to people throughout the world sooner rather than later.”

NIAID began investigating malaria over 50 years ago, and today the Institute is the world's leading supporter of malaria research. NIAID-supported scientists conduct laboratory and clinical research, including field-based studies of malaria in endemic areas of Africa and Southeast Asia, such as Mali, Ghana, Malawi and Papua New Guinea. In 1997, NIAID developed a multiyear plan to accelerate malaria vaccine research. In keeping with its goals, recent initiatives have been marked by several milestones:

- the launch of an Internet-based resource center for malaria research reagents;
- preclinical and clinical testing of promising vaccine candidates; and
- the publication of a detailed genetic map of the malaria parasite.

NIAID is also pursuing studies on the human immune response to malaria, establishing clinical research and trial preparation sites in endemic regions, and promoting collaborative efforts for vaccine discovery, production and evaluation.

One such partnership is spelled out in the new Memorandum of Understanding. Together MVI and NIAID will develop joint workplans for targeted activities to be funded by MVI. At its discretion, MVI will direct funding for NIAID-administered programs to the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The Congressionally created Foundation, which also signed the agreement, fosters collaborative relationships in education, research and related activities among NIH, industry, academia and nonprofit organizations. Another party to the agreement is the NIH Office of Technology Transfer, which will oversee patents and inventions that might arise from research conducted in government laboratories.

MVI is a special program managed by PATH, whose mission is to improve health, especially the health of women and children.

NIAID is a component of the NIH. NIAID conducts and supports research to prevent, diagnose and treat illness such as HIV disease and other sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, malaria, asthma and allergies. NIH is an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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Press releases, fact sheets and other NIAID-related materials are available on the NIAID Web site at www.niaid.nih.gov.



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