

**Media contact:**

*Lilli Kim, 404-727-7709, llkim@rmy.emory.edu*

*January 10, 2001*

***Malaria Vaccine Initiative establishes partnership with Emory Vaccine Research Center at Yerkes to test malaria vaccine candidates***

Under the auspices of a newly formed partnership with the Malaria Vaccine Initiative at PATH (Program for Appropriate Technology in Health), the Emory University Vaccine Research Center has begun the first of a series of malaria vaccine trials that researchers hope will significantly advance progress toward an effective vaccine.

Heading the trials is Mary Galinski, Ph.D., of the Division of Infectious Diseases of Emory's Department of Medicine and an affiliate scientist at the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center, where the Vaccine Research Center is located. The trials are sponsored by the Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI) at PATH, a non-profit organization that conducts health programs around the world.

The new relationship between Emory and MVI signifies that Emory will play a major role in the research and development of candidate vaccines for malaria, which remains an enormous health problem throughout the world.

Over the next several years, Dr. Galinski and her collaborator, Yerkes scientist Alberto Moreno, M.D., will conduct multiple staggered trials in primates aimed at assessing the safety, dosing and immunogenicity of several potential vaccines. These primate trials are an important step in the development of malaria vaccines.

"Yerkes is paving the way for malaria vaccine development," Dr. Galinski said, emphasizing that primate trials are vital to the successful development of safe, effective malaria vaccines. "We welcome this opportunity to participate in the testing of vaccine candidates, which will be chosen from among those developed by leading institutions from various parts of the world, and will involve scientists from both developed and developing countries where malaria is prevalent."

"I am pleased that the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center at Emory University has joined us as a partner in the global effort to develop a malaria vaccine," said Dr. Regina Rabinovich, director of MVI. "This is a critical public-private partnership. It is through such partnerships that real progress towards a malaria vaccine for the world can be made."

The establishment of the Vaccine Research Center was a crucial factor in MVI's decision to bring its research effort to Emory. "The world-class resources of the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center, the malaria-specific expertise at the Emory Vaccine Research Center, and the

partnerships MVI is creating with vaccine developers are a synergistic combination that will enhance the rapid and detailed evaluation of malaria candidate vaccines," Dr. Rabinovich said.

Malaria annually infects 300 to 500 million people in more than 90 countries, according to the World Health Organization. Each year the disease kills millions of people, mostly children. Pregnant women also are particularly vulnerable to contracting malaria and developing life-threatening complications. Almost half of the world's population is considered at risk for malaria, which is prevalent in tropical regions, including parts of Africa, Southeast Asia, South America, Central America, India and Oceania.

In conjunction with her pursuit of viable vaccines, Dr. Galinski is studying the genetic and biological make-up of *Plasmodium*, the organism that causes malaria. Genetic differences among the four species of malaria that infect humans have contributed to the difficulty in developing malaria vaccines. Ultimately, several vaccines will be needed to eliminate sickness caused by all four species.

###

In 1992, Dr. Galinski founded the Malaria Foundation International ([www.malaria.org](http://www.malaria.org)), a non-profit organization whose aim is to support research by forming global networks to foster communication and collaboration among malaria scientists and health workers.

In keeping with the worldwide shift toward fostering global efforts in malaria research, in June 1999 PATH established the Malaria Vaccine Initiative ([www.malariavaccine.org](http://www.malariavaccine.org)) through a \$50 million award by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. PATH is an international non-profit organization whose mission is to improve health, especially that of women and children. To that end, MVI aims to accelerate the development of promising malaria vaccine candidates and ensure their availability and accessibility for the developing world.