

Sabin institute convenes scientists to discuss typhoid vaccine

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Singapore: Coalition against Typhoid (CaT), an initiative of the Sabin Vaccine Institute, will convene scientists, researchers and biotech experts at the Vaccines for Enteric Diseases (VED) conference in Thailand to discuss how a highly anticipated conjugate typhoid vaccine could expedite global efforts to help prevent this disease.

"Vaccines are a cost-effective, safe and immediate way to protect the world's most marginalized people suffering from typhoid," said Dr Naveen Thacker, director at Deep Children Hospital and Research Center, India and president elect of the Asia Pacific Pediatric Association. "The conjugate vaccine is a milestone in typhoid prevention and provides an enhanced ability to improve the lives of school children, adults and especially young children, who have the highest burden of disease."

The World Health Organization (WHO) issued recommendations supporting the use of typhoid vaccines more than a decade ago, yet many endemic countries have yet to embrace them.

Increased attention on typhoid comes amidst news that this disease is highly endemic in Asia and, increasingly, sub-Saharan Africa. Extensive resistance to antibiotics to treat typhoid has also endangered people, but new data on the burden and geographic distribution of drug resistance is emerging.

"The emergence of drug resistant typhoid strains such as H58 is alarming and has already caused a global upsurge in the disease," said Dr Gordon Dougan, head of Pathogens and Representative of the board of management at the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute in the UK. "Mapping the distribution of drug resistance will be critical to help countries control typhoid and assure patients get appropriate care and don't suffer unnecessarily."

According to the WHO, typhoid impacts an estimated 21 million people and causes more than 216,000 deaths annually, mostly among pre-school and school-age children. The WHO reports that 90 percent of typhoid deaths occur in Asia. However, new evidence reveals hyper-endemic and epidemic typhoid in Africa.

"To have the greatest impact, typhoid vaccination efforts must be integrated with other intervention strategies such as clinical care and safe water and basic sanitation," said Dr Samir Saha from the Bangladesh Institute of Child Health at the Dhaka Shishu Hospital, Bangladesh. "But in Asia, a region where typhoid is highly endemic, China, Thailand and Vietnam are the only countries to have done this."

Ultimately, typhoid can be largely eliminated through improved water and sanitation systems. However, the development of such infrastructure requires significant capital investments beyond the near-term reach of most countries in the region. Until this can happen, safe, effective and affordable vaccines should be utilized together with timely access to appropriate clinical care.

Panelists of the VED Conference's Session on Typhoid Vaccines come from India, South Korea, the US and the United Kingdom.