

WHO to initiate ebola vaccine trial in Guinea

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Singapore: WHO with the Health Ministry of Guinea, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Epicentre and The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), has launched a Phase III trial in Guinea to test the VSV-EBOV vaccine for efficacy and effectiveness to prevent Ebola. The vaccine is developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada. A second vaccine will be tested in a sequential study, as supply becomes available.

"We have worked hard to reach this point," said Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General, WHO. "There has been massive mobilization on the part of the affected countries and all partners to accelerate the development and availability of proven interventions. If a vaccine is found effective, it will be the first preventive tool against Ebola in history."

"The Ebola epidemic shows signs of receding but we cannot let down our guard until we reach zero cases," said Marie-Paule Kieny, assistant director-general, who leads the Ebola Research and Development effort at WHO. "An effective vaccine to control current flare-ups could be the game-changer to finally end this epidemic and an insurance policy for any future ones."

The objectives of the trial are two-fold, to assess if the vaccine protects the contacts who were vaccinated and if vaccinating the contacts will create a buffer - or ring of protected individuals - around the index case to prevent further spread of the infection. Vaccination will also be proposed to frontline workers in the area where the trial will take place.

Canadian governmental institutions are supporting the trial through the provision of critical training and support to the African

research teams conducting the trial, in addition to scientific advice.

"We need to ensure that we continue our efforts to identify infection cases and follow up on their contacts, and in parallel keep promoting R&D for treatments, diagnostics and vaccines. This epidemic remains unpredictable. We don't know when it will end, and that's why it remains crucial for us to keep focusing our efforts on developing a vaccine capable of protecting the population in this epidemic and any future ones. Frontline workers and the contacts of infected patients will be enrolled, if they consent, in the vaccine study," Bertrand Draguez, Medical Director at MSF.