BioSpectrum
the business of Bio & Health Sciences
ASIA EDITION

# Indian firm announces breakthrough for Zika vaccine

February 5, 2016 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

**Indian firm announces breakthrough for Zika vaccine**




**Singapore**: Hyderabad, India based Vaccines and Bio-Therapeutic manufacturer, Bharat Biotech, announced breakthrough in developing world's first, 2 promising candidates ZIKAVAC vaccines for Zika infection.

"We have two ZikaVac vaccine candidates in development; one is a recombinant vaccine and another an inactivated vaccine that has reached the stage of pre-clinical testing in animals," Dr Krishna Ella, CMD, Bharat Biotech announced. Bharat Biotech began work on the Zika Virus a year ago.

WHO just announced a disease linked to the Zika virus in Latin America poses a global public health emergency requiring a united response. Zika is now present in 23 countries. Brazil, the hardest-hit country, has reported around 3,530 cases of the devastating birth defect called microcephaly in 2015 that are strongly suspected to be related to Zika. The Zika virus is spread by mosquitoes of the Aedes genus, which can breed in a pool of water as small as a bottle cap and usually bite during the day. The mosquito-transmitted infection is related to Dengue, Yellow Fever and West Nile virus.

"We believe we have an early mover advantage in developing the ZIKAVAC and we are probably the first in the world to file for global patent for Zika Vaccine candidates. We have two candidate vaccines in development. One of them is an inactivated vaccine that has reached the stage of pre-clinical testing in animals
Currently our efforts are towards scale up and characterization of the vaccine product. Our interest in Zika virus, an obscure virus when we started the project a year ago was that the clinical features at an early stage of infection are indistinguishable

from that of Dengue and Chikungunya. Right now consistency in process development has been achieved at 40 L pilot scale. Furthermore, a recombinant vaccine using the surface antigens of the virus is being concurrently developed," said the firm in a statement.

"Considering that women of childbearing age and pregnant women are the prime target group for Zika virus vaccine, we consider safety as the overriding factor in development of a new vaccine for this virus. The vaccine methods developed early on, before the devastating consequences of the epidemics in Brazil came to light provided us a push to accelerate vaccine development," said Dr Sumathy, director, R&D Bharat Biotech.

In the absence of knowledge on viral pathogenesis and immune correlates required for protection, an early start in vaccine development has nevertheless provided a fair advantage to face the eventuality of an epidemic outbreak in the region," Dr Sumathy added.

Ã?Â

"The first thing is to be prepared for the worst," says Dr Ella said who along with Dr Sumathy and the R&D team at Bharat Biotech is working in the Zika vaccine program said. We hope to announce its arrival of ZIKAVAC to the world as early as possible.

Ã?Â

Ã?Â