

CEPI, GSK to develop vaccine for 2019-nCoV virus

04 February 2020 | News

GSK to make adjuvant technology available to support the rapid development of candidate vaccines



CEPI, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and GSK have announced a new collaboration aimed at helping the global effort to develop a vaccine for the 2019-nCoV virus. In this new move, GSK will make its established pandemic vaccine adjuvant platform technology available to enhance the development of an effective vaccine against 2019-nCoV.

GSK is a leader in the development of innovative vaccines using different adjuvant systems. An adjuvant is added to some vaccines to enhance the immune response, thereby creating a stronger and longer-lasting immunity against infections than the vaccine alone. The use of an adjuvant is of particular importance in a pandemic situation since it can reduce the amount of antigen required per dose, allowing more vaccine doses to be produced and made available to more people.

Dr Richard Hatchett, CEO, CEPI commented:

“Gaining access to GSK’s world-leading adjuvant technology is a huge step forward in developing a vaccine against the novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV. Coupling GSK’s adjuvant systems with the pioneering platform technology we are funding has the potential to make more vaccine available more rapidly – by decreasing the dose of vaccine antigen required to protect each individual. This “antigen-sparing” effect makes a given supply of vaccine go farther, increasing the number of people who can benefit.”

Thomas Breuer, Chief Medical Officer, GSK Vaccines, commented:

“As a leader in science and innovation, we believe we can help to contribute to the fight against 2019-nCoV with one of our advanced vaccine adjuvant systems. Our adjuvant technology has previously been used successfully in the pandemic flu setting. It enables using only small quantities of the vaccine antigen which allows the production of more doses of the vaccine – a crucial advantage in a pandemic.”

CEPI will coordinate engagements between GSK and entities funded by CEPI who are interested in testing their vaccine platform with GSK’s adjuvant technology to develop effective vaccines against 2019-nCoV. The first agreement to formalize this arrangement has been signed between GSK and the University of Queensland, Australia, which entered a partnering

agreement with CEPI in January 2019 to develop a “molecular clamp” vaccine platform, intended to enable targeted and rapid vaccine production against multiple viral pathogens. CEPI has extended this funding to work on a 2019-nCoV virus vaccine candidate, and access to the GSK adjuvant technology will now support this early stage research.

Roger Connor, President, GSK Vaccines, added:

“At GSK we believe in the value CEPI can bring to responding to outbreaks like 2019-nCoV. We are proud to contribute to cutting edge research from scientists at the University of Queensland, and we are open to working with other partners, who have a promising vaccine platform that could be used together with our adjuvant.”

Prof Peter Høj, Vice-Chancellor, The University of Queensland, added:

“The research team at The University of Queensland are progressing a 2019-nCoV vaccine program and the availability of the GSK adjuvant will enable us to carry out important pre-clinical experiments designed to assess vaccine effectiveness.”

This announcement complements 4 prior CEPI programmes of work relating to 2019-nCoV vaccine development already announced by CEPI, in partnership with: CureVac; Inovio; The University of Queensland; and Moderna, Inc. and the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. These partnerships seek to improve the scientific understanding of the novel coronavirus, and to develop vaccines against it. These programmes will leverage rapid response platforms already supported by CEPI with the aim of advancing 2019-nCoV vaccine candidates into clinical testing as quickly as possible. In addition, CEPI launched a new call for proposals to rapidly develop and manufacture already proven vaccine technology that can be used against the new coronavirus. The call is rolling and open until February.

Both CEPI and GSK are committed to principles of equitable access and will work together in this collaboration to ensure that this principle governs the development, use and access of any 2019-nCoV vaccine developed through the collaboration.