

Ella Foundation's Ebola vaccine raises hopes

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Genome Valley-based Ella Foundation on April 27, 2015 announced the completion of preliminary studies on an Ebola vaccine. The vaccine candidate is a human adenovirus engineered to contain an optimized synthetic gene based on viruses from the 2014 Ebola outbreak. Its platform uses controlled production of the glycoprotein.

The Ebola virus has a short ribbon-like structure, and contains a coat studded with a spike-like protein called the glycoprotein and immune responses against this protein can help protect against disease.

Founded and funded by Dr Krishna Ella and Ms Suchitra Ella, Ella Foundation is among the two foundations from the Asian region which had the unique distinction of winning the Gates Foundation Grand Challenges Explorations (GCE) grant, an initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates to foster innovation in global health research.

Announcing the development Dr Krishna Ella, founder director of Ella Foundation said "we believe Innovation needs to be pursued and funneled into control strategies whenever appropriate. No nation can withstand sudden shocks, whether these come from a changing climate or a virus. Availability of a vaccine should help India in its preparedness to combat the disease in case the virus lands on our shores. It would also be useful to protect our healthcare and military aid workers to African nations and attain world-wide immunization goals."

This program is an important step from Ella Foundation to support World Immunisation Goals. Applauding the world immunisation week initiated by WHO and observed in the last week of April every year, Dr Ella pointed out Childhood immunisation is one of the most efficient ways to protect the health of children, family, and community. It is among the most cost-effective public health measures that helps minimize disease burden.

Currently, there are no drugs or vaccines for Ebola. Urgency was never felt until the disease reached epidemic proportions in 2014. Dr. Ella, says at this moment, animal experiments with the candidate vaccine have been completed, and these will be

followed by pre-clinical toxicology and then clinical trials in humans.

According to the World Health Organisation, Ebola Virus is a deadly, tenacious and unforgiving virus. Up to 90% of those who show symptoms of Ebola can die. The early warnings about the disease fatality were ignored until recently since it only affected a tiny part of Africa, and the total yearly deaths had never crossed 1000. The current outbreak has reportedly killed more than 10,000 out of over 25,000 cases. This is the first time it has been recorded outside central Africa.

Ebola Vaccine Program initiated by Ella Foundation is an expression of solidarity and the pledge by the Prime Minister of India to help the West African nations with their fight against Ebola virus disease. Ella Foundation earlier helped Bharat Biotech to develop H1N1 pandemic influenza in the early stage.

Ella Foundation is a not-for-profit research organization with a mandate to contribute to diagnosis, control and prevention of infectious diseases in man and animals. The Foundation began research and development on Ebola vaccine early November 2014.