

India gets its magical vaccine, PM Modi calls it a great achievement

10 March 2015 | News | By Rahul Koul Koul

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Each year, diarrhoea caused by rotavirus results in 10 lakh hospitalizations and kills nearly 80 thousand children under the age of 5 years. Besides causing emotional stress to the affected families, it also pushes many Indian families below the poverty line and also imposes significant economic burden on the country.

But now India has realized its dream of developing an indigenous vaccine against the rotavirus, the main cause behind diarrhoea. Developed by Bharat Biotech, the oral rotavirus vaccine, ROTAVAC is safe and effective in preventing rotavirus diarrhoea.

While launching the made in India vaccine, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi felicitated all the partners in the development of the first indigenous rotavirus vaccine, which involved the complete cycle from basic research to product development of this advanced vaccine in India. This announcement fulfilled Bharat Biotech's promise of a \$1/ dose vaccine to governments in low income countries. The company has received commercial licensure and the vaccine is safe to use.

PM also lauded this initiative as an example of India's capabilities for high-end research and development; manufacture of sophisticated pharmaceutical products in India; and, effective Public-Private-Partnership model for finding affordable solutions to societal challenges.

The Prime Minister remarked that India is characterized by large size and diversity; and continues to face a number of socio-economic challenges. He hoped that the development of the rotavirus vaccine would inspire higher levels of research, development and manufacturing activities in India, not just in medical science, but also in other advanced areas of science and technology. The Prime Minister felt that solutions found in India would have great relevance to the rest of the world, especially the developing world.

The vaccine has been developed under an innovative public-private partnership model. It involved partnership between the Ministry of Science and Technology, the institutions of the US Government, various government institutions and NGOs in India, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Funding by government of India supported basic research in educational and scientific institutions in India. This was also supplemented by the support of the US Government institutions like the National Institute of Health. The Gates Foundation and Bharat Biotech India Limited contributed towards product development and testing. The successful launch of the first indigenously developed and produced vaccine today was the result of an extraordinary effort spread over the last 25 years.

The Bharat Biotech India that was involved in the development and production of the vaccine was selected in 1997-1998 by the India-US Vaccine Action Program and the standard government procedures. The company has been given undertaken to keep the cost of the vaccine at \$ 1 per dose. This is the third such vaccine available globally against Rotavirus and, at the current prices, the cheapest.

Union Ministers, Mr Venkaiah Naidu, Mr JP Nadda and Mr Harsh Vardhan were present on the occasion.