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Newsletter May 2014

Queen Sofia of Spain opened TB vaccine symposium



Her Majesty Queen Sofia of Spain last week officially opened the symposium: 'A new horizon for preventive vaccines against tuberculosis.' This symposium was organised by TBVI, in cooperation with the University of Zaragoza and Fundación Ramón Areces, in Madrid. During the two-days symposium 23 renowned speakers from 12 countries shared their latest results in TB vaccine research.

Only in 2012, TB killed more than 1.3 million people while 8.6 million people were suffering from TB. Therefore researchers are developing protective vaccines, which will also protect people from getting multidrug-resistant strains of TB (MDR-TB) and extremely drug resistant (XDR-TB) tuberculosis, which are very difficult to diagnose and treat.

Need for a tuberculosis vaccine is greater than ever

Douglas Young, acting director of TBVI, recalled in the presence of HM the Queen that "It is estimated that TB has claimed billions of lives over the past two hundred years. It continues to kill over a million people every year and is a major cause of death in people living with AIDS."

Douglas Young has emphasized the role that Spain is playing in the development of a solution to this epidemic. "In the 1990s, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched a new phase of research of vaccines against tuberculosis which culminated with an ambitious set of objectives set out in the Madrid Conference in 1995. From 2000 to 2013, tuberculosis vaccine research in Europe has been driven forward by three major consortia (TB vaccine cluster, **TBVAC** and **NEWTBVAC**) that are widely recognised as establishing a model for multinational collaboration in pursuit of a common goal. With the widespread emergence of drug-resistant forms of the disease, the need for a tuberculosis vaccine is greater than ever, and we hope that this successful European funding model will be continued as an integral component of the Horizon 2020 programme."



EU major funder

Today, more than a dozen preventive vaccine candidates are being studied in several clinical trials. **Stefan Kaufmann**, chair of the Steering Committee of TBVI's NEWTBVAC project and founding director of the Max Planck Institute of Infection Biology, mentioned that ten of these candidates were designed in Europe, of which two third received major direct funding from the EU.



Very good interim results Spanish vaccine candidate

Carlos Martin of the University of Zaragoza and partner of TBVI, mentioned the role of the Spanish scientists and collaboration among partners. Vaccine candidate MTBVAC was built and developed at the University of Zaragoza in collaboration with the Institut Pasteur in Paris, and the biopharmaceutical company Biofabri. It is currently in a clinical trial in Switzerland at the CHUV in Lausanne with Professor Spertini as principal investigator. "Interim reports show very good results and have created great excitement awaiting the results of immunology at the end of 2014," he explained.



Collaboration is the key



Stefan Kaufmann recalled in the presence of the Queen how vaccines are among the measures most successful intervention in medicine, saving millions of lives. He thanked the European Union, which has contributed to the financial support of the research and development of vaccines against tuberculosis in the past 16 years. "But Europe is not alone in this battle. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, also represented at this symposium is an important source of funding for the development of vaccines against tuberculosis, directly and through supporting Aeras. To meet the urgent need for a vaccine against tuberculosis, collaboration is the key word," he stressed. Therefore we are developing a global partnership to achieve the goal of controlling this disease. It was concluded that the TB vaccine field needs the support of politics, civil society and private foundations. It's good to see that Spain is aware of this responsibility at all levels, notably the Royal Family.

You can view the media outreach, and the complete talks of the speakers at our website (bottom of the page)

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