

Hopes for TB vaccine boosted

The world's leading candidate for a tuberculosis vaccine, developed at Oxford University, is to move into the next stage of development.

Tuberculosis is a global problem, infecting millions worldwide. TB, which is caused by the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacterium, is the world's second leading cause of death from infectious disease in adults, after HIV/AIDS, according to the World Health Organization.

Over one third of the world's population is infected with the disease, and an estimated 1.7 million people die of tuberculosis every year. One of ten people infected will develop the active form of the disease during their lifetime. Drug-resistant strains including multi-drug resistant TB and extensively drug-resistant TB are on the rise, raising concerns about the efficacy of the current BCG vaccine and leaving many patients without effective treatment. This year, the World Health Organization reported the highest rates of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis ever recorded.

A joint venture between the University of Oxford and Emergent BioSolutions Inc has been formed to develop the vaccine.

Isis has exclusively licensed the MVA85A tuberculosis vaccine candidate and related technology to the Consortium. If successful, this would be the first new vaccine licensed to prevent tuberculosis in over 80 years with major implications for control of the worldwide TB epidemic.

The Oxford-Emergent Tuberculosis Consortium has secured £8 million from the Wellcome Trust and the Aeras Global TB Vaccine Foundation to fund a clinical trial to test the vaccine's efficacy. The Phase IIb trial will involve 3,000 infants in South Africa, and is likely to begin in 2009.



A Gambian infant is inoculated as part of a previous MRC study with the MVA85A vaccine.