

HIV Vaccine trial to commence July 2003 in London and Lausanne; “EuroVacc 01”

A two-centre clinical trial of a novel concept vaccine for the prevention of HIV infection will commence in Lausanne Switzerland and London UK in July 2003. The phase I trial will recruit 24 healthy volunteers at low risk of HIV infection, and will study closely the quality of the immune response to the vaccine, and its safety. A successful trial will lead to the progress of this vaccine to larger phase II studies in these and other centres across Europe.

The vaccine, called NYVAC-C, has been developed by a European consortium called EuroVacc, funded through the EU Fifth Framework Programme for Research. Aventis Pasteur, the vaccine division of Aventis, has produced the vaccine. *gag*, *pol*, *nef* and *env* synthetic genes of HIV-1 clade C were co-developed by the Institute for Medical Microbiology (RIMMH) and GENEART GmbH, Regensburg within the EuroVacc cluster. EuroVacc 01 comprises scientists and clinicians from France, Holland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. This group has been working together for more than five years, and has developed a pipeline of potential vaccines which have been tested so far only in the laboratory. The first of these novel vaccines is now poised to enter a human phase I clinical trial.

EuroVacc 01 trial

The clinical trial will evaluate the safety and immunogenicity of the NYVAC-C. NYVAC C is a highly attenuated recombinant vaccinia virus bearing the *gag*, *pol*, *nef* and *env* genes of HIV-1 clade C, the most commonly transmitted HIV strain worldwide. The study will require the recruitment of 24 healthy volunteers: 12 will be recruited at the Centre Hospitalier Vaudois (CHUV) in Lausanne, and 12 at St Mary's Hospital, Imperial College London. All volunteers, who can be either men or women, should be between 18 and 55 yrs, HIV-negative and at low risk of acquiring infection.

The trial will carefully evaluate the safety and potency of this vaccine, in terms of the generation of cellular immunity to HIV, thought to be a key determinant of protection against infection. If successful, EuroVacc intend to study combinations of their vaccines, in order to produce the most immunogenic construct to take to larger trials, ultimately in populations at risk of HIV infection.

EuroVacc Foundation

In order to promote HIV vaccine research in Europe and to expedite the movement of vaccine concepts from the laboratory to the clinic, principal investigators of EuroVacc have created the EuroVacc Foundation, founded in November 2002 in Lausanne, Switzerland. The aims of the Foundation are to facilitate European collaboration in vaccine development, to coordinate European efforts and to raise funds for fundamental and clinical research so as to accelerate the development of a safe and effective vaccine against HIV infection. The Foundation will also promote educational and training programmes relevant to vaccine development worldwide.

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