

Ethiopia



Epidemiological Situation

The National adult HIV prevalence rate for the year 2003 among pregnant women was estimated at 4.4% (MOH 2004). The average prevalence rate for urban areas is 13.2% (range 3.1% to 23.4%). In Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, the prevalence of HIV among ANC attendees was 14.6%, while in the rural areas the average prevalence was 2.3%. The HIV epidemic in Ethiopia is predominantly of the C-subtype.

Overall HIV/AIDS Policy

National AIDS policies in Ethiopia acknowledge the need for a more comprehensive response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic including: the provision and monitoring of ART; voluntary counseling and testing for HIV; prevention of MTCT; prevention and treatment of tuberculosis; treatment of sexually transmitted infections; social, spiritual and peer support; respect for human rights; and reducing the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS.

HIV Vaccine Preparedness

National AIDS Vaccine Plan: Draft document prepared in process of finalization

Vaccine Policies developed by: Ethiopian AIDS Vaccine Initiative in collaboration with the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO)

Scientific Review and Protocol Approval: Institutional Review Boards, National Ethical Clearance Committee and Drug Administration and Control Authority

Ethical Framework

The National Health Ethics Guideline of Ethiopia adopted the fundamental ethics principles based on the law of the land's policies, the National Health Science and Technology Council's (NHSTC) health and drug policies, and the WHO's recommendations and Ethical Guidelines. Initially during the ethical review process, the research protocol has to obtain clearance at an institutional level by Institutional Ethics Review Committees (IERC). When applicable, such as when the research involves new drugs, vaccines, therapeutic regimens, or other biological products or invasive diagnostic procedures, or involves a vulnerable member of the society, the proposal is sent for further approval by the National Ethical Review Committee (NERC). The NHSTC of the Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission (ESTC) serves as the secretariat for NERC. A clinical intervention involving new products requires additional clearance from the Drug Administration and Control Agency (DACA) of the Ministry of Health.

HIV Capacity and Infrastructure to Conduct Vaccine Research

Laboratory Facilities: EHNRI is a research institute mandated to undertake research on health, nutrition and traditional medicine with relevance to Ethiopia. The HIV/AIDS lab facilities of EHNRI have immunological and virological techniques, including flow cytometry, sequencers and viral load machines, and storage facilities for sera and viable cell samples. There is a database system (a local area network and two data servers, 30 PCs, laptop computers, printers and relevant devices). Mobile laboratory vans/cars are available to shuttle specimens from study sites to the central laboratory. The current HIV/AIDS Unit has 28 staff (3 senior scientists, 1 medical doctor, 3 nurses, 5 laboratory technicians, 1 counsellor, 15 administrative and supportive staff).

Study populations (cohort studies): EHNRI has been undertaking a longitudinal cohort study on natural HIV/AIDS disease progression as of 1994 involving two factory populations in Ethiopia involving about 2000 persons.

Potential Trial Sites: The incidence of HIV in the EHNRI cohorts was too low to be identified as high-risk cohort. Using the HIV-1 incidence assay we plan to estimate the HIV incidence among persons tested at the VCT centre of the Armed Forces Teaching Hospital and at the Police Hospital and in the Akaki community and based on the information gathered, we will determine which groups should be targeted for longitudinal follow-up. Depending on the availability of vaccine HIV products we plan to start with a phase 2/3 clinical trial within the next three years.

Clinical Trials

Nevirapine trial on MTCT of HIV at Addis Ababa University- Medical Faculty /Black Lion hospital in collaboration with John Hopkins University

Other vaccine related activities: rabies-vaccine, meningococcal vaccine

Other trials: antiretroviral therapy, microbicide feasibility studies

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International Collaborators in Vaccine Development

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