WHO revises Zika vaccine profile

Zika Virus remains an enduring public health challenge likely to cause future outbreaks that put susceptible populations at risk, thus requiring intense R&D action. A first Zika Vaccine Target Product Profile (TPP), describing the preferred product characteristics for vaccines, was published in July 2016. Due to rapidly evolving new evidence, The Blueprint team did a robust review of the TPP in November 2016 to make the profile more fit-for-purpose. The revised Zika Vaccine TPP is now available here: Zika Vaccine TPP.

Updated list of diseases likely to cause public health emergencies

On 26 January 2017, WHO published a revised list of priority diseases that need urgent R&D in order to prevent public health emergencies. The list includes 9 disease categories for which few or no medical countermeasures exist due to market failures or lack of scientific knowledge. The list provides the basis for work on the WHO R&D Blueprint and builds on the first list developed by a coalition of international experts in November 2015. See list or Read more.

Publication of prioritization methodology for epidemic prone diseases

Based upon international best practice, WHO has developed a special tool to determine which diseases and pathogens to prioritize for R&D in public health emergency contexts. The analysis takes into account 39 facets of disease, including how it spreads from person to person, what tools are at our disposal to deal with it, how severe it is, whether it also affects animals, its potential societal impacts, as well as its ability to evolve over time. WHO has now made the full methodology publicly available. See methodology here.
Towards better Zika diagnostic tests
Global scientific efforts must continue to gain better understanding of the Zika virus, its vectors, modes of transmission and the natural history of the disease. Key to this effort is having an accurate diagnosis of Zika virus infection; currently, developing the appropriate diagnostics is limited by several factors. WHO’s current R&D activities on Zika diagnostics are summarized in a PLoS article published this month. Read the article here.

Addressing regulatory gaps during public health emergencies
NRAs are still unprepared to address public health emergencies, largely due to lack of resources and adequate staffing. In most regions, NRAs have limited experience of communicating with stakeholders, media and the public. To read the paper identifying regulatory gaps click here.

Public consultation on WHO MERS-CoV vaccine
As of February 2017, WHO had been notified of 1905 laboratory confirmed cases of infection and at least 677 deaths related to MERS-CoV. To address this emerging public health concern, the WHO R&D Blueprint has developed a set of MERS-CoV vaccine target product profiles (TPPs). They follow the strategies outlined in the MERS-CoV roadmap led by WHO and are developed with key stakeholders. The draft TPPs are for 2 human vaccines and 1 animal vaccine. The document was made available for public consultation. Click here.

Highly effective Ebola vaccine announced
The experimental VSV-EBOV vaccine is the first to prevent Ebola infection, one of the most lethal known pathogens. The clinical trial was led by WHO, together with other international partners, in Guinea. Results demonstrate that among the 5837 people who received the vaccine, no Ebola cases were recorded after 10 days or more of taking the injection. The R&D Blueprint builds on the positive R&D experience during the Ebola outbreak. To learn more about these compelling results, please refer to the press release or The Lancet article.

Developing guidance tools for biological sample sharing in public health emergencies
An effective response to a public health emergency can depend on being able to move biological material and data from one place to another to advance research into the vector and appropriate medical countermeasures. The movement of such samples and any associated data needs to be as simple and transparent as possible, and it needs to protect the interests of the owners of the samples. The R&D Blueprint is working on tools, such as Material Transfer Agreements, to aid countries safeguard their biological resources while also assisting science. For more information, follow the link.
Update on the R&D Blueprint Activities
See a recap of Blueprint achievements and activities to improve R&D preparedness during public health emergencies. Read more.

UPCOMING CONSULTATIONS

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