MEMORANDUM

From: Dr J.-M. Okwo-Bele Director IVB
To: Regional Director, EMRO
Date: 31 August 2010

Our ref: IVB/M12
Attention: 

Your ref: 
Through: 

Originator: JMOB/jb
Subject: POLIO VACCINE FOR ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION

Thank you very much for your memorandum concerning polio vaccine for routine immunization, stimulating views and suggestions to bring the issue of a switch to bOPV for routine immunization to SAGE.

I agree with you that this is both an appropriate and timely topic on which to consult SAGE, and which falls right within the group’s ongoing work to examine both pre and post-eradication policy options for routine polio immunization.

Indeed cVDPVs are of increasing importance to global polio eradication and, since the introduction of better diagnostics, type 2 seems to be responsible for a disproportionate amount of this cVDPV disease (6 of the last 7 cVDPVs).

As you are aware, the concept of stopping type 2 vaccination, in advance of the other 2 serotypes, has previously been discussed widely in international polio meetings, but this discussion has indeed been quiet since the early 2000s given (a) the discovery that most cVDPVs are in fact due to type 2, (b) the challenge of ensuring containment of all type 2 wild polioviruses and cVDPVs in advance of switching to bOPV, and (c) the ongoing problem of chronic iVDPV excretors and aVDPVs, which though rare, suggest that there would be an ongoing reintroduction of type 2 viruses from these sources after stopping OPV type 2, carrying with it the risk of new type 2 outbreaks.

Given the increasing knowledge on cVDPVs, and particularly the problem of type 2 cVDPVs, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative is planning to convene in early 2011 another expert international consultation on these viruses, their public health importance and their potential implications for routine polio immunization policy.

With respect to the vaccine supply, fortunately in view of the recent and ongoing expansion in bOPV manufacturing capacity globally with new products coming on line by end-2010 and again in mid-2011, it is anticipated that global bOPV demand would be fully met even by mid-2011.

cc: Dr Nadia Teleb, Regional Adviser EMRO
Director HQ/POL
Regional Director EMRO

We have discussed the best approach with Director POL and have already brought the issue to the attention of the Chair of SAGE, proposing that it be looked at by its polio related working group. The expectation is that the working group Chair will introduce the issue at its next meeting and prepare for a discussion at a forthcoming SAGE meeting. Particular attention will be given to ensuring that SAGE is fully engaged in the planned expert consultation on these viruses.

With best regards,

Dr Jean-Marie Okwo-Bele