

A new vaccine against rotavirus launched

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New Delhi Dec 03, 2019: Vice President of India, Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, today launched a new generation vaccine against rotavirus developed under a public-private partnership project involving the Department of Biotechnology in the Union Ministry of Science and Technology and Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech and other international organisations.

Welcoming the new vaccine, Mr. Naidu urged media and medical professionals to create awareness about various health problems. He said, "There is a need for vaccination at the right time. While the government is doing its best, medical professionals should also take upon themselves the responsibility to remove apprehension about vaccination for prevention of diseases and to better the health of the nation and its people."

The Chairman and Managing Director of Bharat Biotech, Dr. Krishna Ella, said, the new vaccine is cost-effective as it is highly effective and has low cold chain footprint. It will be available in multi dose vials, resulting in savings of about US dollars 0.30 per dose in supply chain and delivery costs.

He also noted that his company has invested about US dollars 20 million to develop new manufacturing facilities and supporting infrastructure in its Genome Valley plant in Hyderabad, with an installed manufacturing capacity of about 200 million doses per year. The project was supported in part by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

An official press release from Bharat Biotech said that the vaccine named "ROTAVAC 5D" has been evaluated in clinical trials in India and other countries. "It is safe, effective and affordable, besides being cross-protective against a variety of rotavirus strains. The study results showed clear evidence of protection across different rotavirus strains and continued efficacy in the second year of life. Currently, over 25 countries have granted patents for it".

Further, the release said, the vaccine was a miniaturized vaccine, delivering the product with a dose volume of a mere 0.5milli litre. "It enables complete delivery of the antigenic payload in 5 drops, avoiding spit-ups observed with larger dose volumes".

The vaccine, it added, can be stored at two to eight degrees Celsius for 24 months and is stable at thirty seven degrees celsius for 7 days. "It will be available in multi-dose vials with cold chain footprints of about four cubic centimetre per dose. It has the smallest cold chain footprint for any rotavirus vaccine".

The occasion also marked the achievement of 100 million doses of worldwide supplies of the company's ROTAVAC vaccine. The milestone was reached within two years of WHO Prequalification.

Dr Seth Berkley, CEO of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, noted, "The introduction of Rotavac vaccine had helped protect millions against the leading cause of deadly diarrhoea in children worldwide. It has been critical in ensuring better supply availability as well as diversity of product profiles. Bharat Biotech has been a key partner for Gavi, and I commend the company and its employees for reaching this milestone so quickly."

Steve Davis, President and CEO of the nonprofit global health organization PATH, which was one of the organisations involved in the development of ROTAVAC and ROTAVAC 5D, said, "We are proud of PATH's partnership with Bharat Biotech and other international researchers and we are pleased to see improvements in the supply of affordable rotavirus vaccines as they are rolled out in public health programs in India and around the world."