



Meeting report

EVM workshop

How to provide sufficient influenza pandemic vaccines in time?

Brussels 10 January 2006

The European Vaccine Manufacturers* (EVM) organised a lunch workshop on 10th January 2006 attended by Permanent Representatives, MEPs, EU Commission officials and some members of the press.

Following an introduction by Didier Hoch, EVM President, Luc Hessel M.D., Dr Tony Colegate and Dr Bram Palache (members of the EVM Influenza Pandemic Working Group) stressed, first, the importance of developing pandemic flu vaccines and set out the key challenges. In this respect, vaccine manufacturers are already engaged in the production of prototype vaccines, which in the event of a pandemic will reduce the time needed to produce specific pandemic vaccines. The second key point is the link between interpandemic vaccine use and the production capacity required to meet the demands of a pandemic. This is important because vaccine production is complex and if a new manufacturing plant is required to scale up capacity the lead times will be between 3 to 5 years. Therefore, a first step would be that Member States should fully implement existing vaccine recommendations to allow manufacturers to expand their production capacity. Last but not least, in order to meet the challenges of being well prepared in the event of a flu pandemic, the importance of a collaborative effort between all the parties involved, national authorities, the EU Commission, WHO and the vaccine manufacturers, was stressed.

After the presentations, delegates raised a number of questions. Mrs Anne Deltour (Permanent Representative for Belgium) asked about the possibility of providing vaccine coverage on a global scale and how distribution of vaccines amongst many countries could be best managed. Mrs Anna Lönnroth (DG Research) drew attention to the recent calls for proposals within EU FP6 for projects aimed at developing both bird flu vaccines and human flu vaccines. Mr Georgs Andrejevs (MEP) pointed out that the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the strategy against an influenza pandemic. In the Resolution, MEPs request the Commission to consider the possibility of using the EU Solidarity Fund as a precautionary instrument for pre-emptive action in preparation for an influenza pandemic, including the production of new vaccines and the development of new testing methods. The EVM President added that the Solidarity Fund should also be used to increase coverage in the developing countries.

Participants agreed that this type of meeting should be organised on a regular basis to keep authorities informed of any future development.

Copies of the speakers' presentations and backgrounder are available in the EVM website: http://www.evm-vaccines.org/current_issues/influenza_pandemic.htm

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*EVM Members are: Baxter, Bernal Biotech, Chiron Vaccines, GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals, Sanofi Pasteur, Sanofi Pasteur MSD, Solvay Pharmaceuticals, Wyeth Vaccines