




EDİTÖRE MEKTUP / LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Introduction of the world's first malaria vaccine in Malawi: World Health Organization

Malawi'de dünyanın ilk sıtma aşısının tanıtımı: Dünya Sağlık Örgütü

Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava¹ , Prateek Shrivastava¹ 

¹Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College & Research Institute, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu, India

Cukurova Medical Journal 2019;44(Suppl 1):596-597.

To the Editor,

Malaria in humans is a life threatening disease resulting because of the 5 parasite species, and is a global public health concern^{1,2}. Acknowledging the fact that the disease is preventable and curable, it is a significant cause of concern that almost 220 million cases and 0.44 million deaths were reported worldwide in the year 2017¹. Children under 5 years of age were identified as the most vulnerable age-group and the African region has been the worst affected, both in terms of number of cases and number of deaths¹. Further, it is an alarming fact that close to 50% of the world's population is at the risk of disease and that 87 nations still had on-going malaria transmission^{1,2}.

Considering the magnitude of the disease, associated complications, life-threatening nature of the disease, global distribution, enormous burden on the health system and preventable/curable nature of the disease, the global leaders have decided to eliminate (viz. interruption of local transmission of a specific species in an earmarked geographical region) the disease¹⁻³. In order to accomplish the same, different measures have been taken, including strengthening of the prevention, diagnostic & curative modalities and adoption of innovative strategies in a tailor-made manner to meet the existing challenges in a specific region^{2,3}.

Despite all these measures, the rate of decline in the

number of cases / deaths is not in proportion with the set targets and in some regions it has started to even reverse, and one of the main reasons for the same is the absence of an effective vaccine to counter the disease¹. However, it is a happy news that after 3 decades of hard work and dedicated efforts and financial investments, RTS,S /AS01 vaccine has been recognized as the first and the only vaccine to significantly minimize the incidence of disease among children⁴. In addition, the rates of hospital admission, and the need for blood transfusions, significantly reduced during the trial⁴.

Taking all these benefits into account, the Government of Malawi gave a green signal to the introduction of the world's first vaccine targeting the disease and will be administered to children up to 2 years of age across 11 districts^{4,5}. Further, it has been planned to introduce the vaccine in Ghana and Kenya in the coming days, and it is a welcome step as a sizeable proportion of cases and deaths are reported from the region⁴. It is high time that in order to bring the malaria control strategies back on track, the ongoing efforts are strengthened with a much-awaited tool of vaccine, which has the potential to save the lives of a significant number of children⁵.

The aim of the pilot project is to administer vaccine to 0.36 million children each year in 3 nations, and then formulate recommendations for the mass-scale use of the vaccine based on the evidence and the experience gained during the pilot run^{4,5}. The

Yazışma Adresi/Address for Correspondence: Dr. Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College & Research Institute, Ammapettai village, Department of Community Medicine, India Email: drshrishri2008@gmail.com

Geliş tarihi/Received: 02.05.2019 Kabul tarihi/Accepted: 25.05.2019 Çevrimiçi yayın/Published online: 27.09.2019

assessed parameters will include reduction in the number of child deaths, vaccine uptake and its safety aspect⁴. Obviously, the successful run will require support from the entire team of healthcare professionals in the nations and continued support from the political leaders and international welfare agencies^{1,4,5}.

In conclusion, the introduction of a malaria vaccine is a much awaited weapon in the battle against the disease and it is the need of the hour to extend full cooperation and support to the prevention and control activities to save the lives of millions of the general population.

Yazar Katkıları: Çalışma konsepti/Tasarımı: SRS, PS; Veri toplama: SRS, PS; Veri analizi ve yorumlama: SRS, PS; Yazı taslağı: SRS, PS; İçeriğin eleştirel incelenmesi: SRS, PS; Son onay ve sorumluluk: SRS, PS; Teknik ve malzeme desteği: SRS, PS; Süpervizyon: SRS, PS; Fon sağlama (mevcut ise): yok.

Hakem Değerlendirmesi: Dış bağımsız.

Çıkar Çatışması: Yazarlar çıkar çatışması beyan etmemişlerdir.

Finansal Destek: Yazarlar finansal destek beyan etmemişlerdir.

Author Contributions: Concept/Design : SRS, PS; Data acquisition: SRS, PS; Data analysis and interpretation: SRS, PS; Drafting manuscript: SRS, PS; Critical revision of manuscript: SRS, PS; Final approval and accountability: SRS, PS; Technical or material support: SRS, PS; Supervision: SRS, PS; Securing funding (if available): n/a.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: Authors declared no conflict of interest.

Financial Disclosure: Authors declared no financial support

REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization. Malaria – Key Facts; 2019. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malaria>.
2. Shrivastava SR, Shrivastava PS, Ramasamy J. Aiming for malaria elimination: World Health Organization. *Ann Trop Med Public Health*. 2017;10:315-6.
3. Shrivastava SR, Shrivastava PS, Ramasamy J. Striving forward towards malaria elimination and the necessity to be persistent in our efforts. *Healthc Low Resour Settings*. 2016;4:5755.
4. World Health Organization. Malaria vaccine pilot launched in Malawi; 2019. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/23-04-2019-malaria-vaccine-pilot-launched-in-malawi>.
5. Adepoju P. RTS,S malaria vaccine pilots in three African countries. *Lancet*. 2019;393:1685.