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With huge GSK funding, IAVI expands vaccine research

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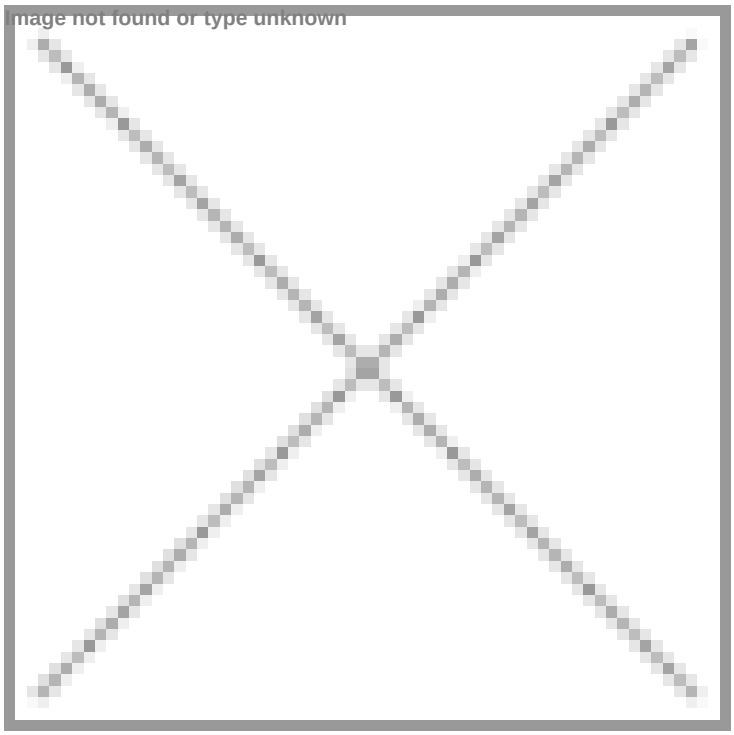

The grant of $350,000 from GSK will help the IAVI to support implementation of the Human Vaccines Project, a new public-private partnership seeking to transform global disease prevention by collaboratively addressing some of the principal scientific problems impeding vaccine development across diseases.

Dr Wayne C Koff, chief scientific Officer, IAVI and founding member of the Human Vaccines Project Board, announced the GSK grant during a press meet in New Delhi on Febrruary 14, 2015.

"Industry involvement will be key to the success of the Human Vaccines Project, and we are excited that GSK has become the first corporate partner of the Project. Their support will help to engage other pharmaceutical partners to join this important new initiative," said Dr Koff.

The GSK grant will help to establish the Project's global consortium and plan its research program. The funding builds on a grant last year to IAVI by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for a series of workshops to explore how to accelerate development of vaccines via a Human Vaccines Project, by tackling the major scientific challenges impeding vaccine research and development (R&D) through greater collaboration, increased knowledge sharing, and innovation. The first workshop, held in February 2014, focused on the scientific challenges to vaccine development, at which leading vaccine experts endorsed the Project's objectives and helped to frame its scientific plan.

"For all that we have achieved with vaccines, there are still far too many diseases that we can't prevent and which have a devastating impact, particularly in the developing world," said Mr Emmanuel Hanon, senior vice president, Vaccines Research and Development, GSK. "The more we can do - both individually and collectively - to overcome the current scientific challenges the better. We are very pleased to support the Human Vaccines Project and we encourage others to join us in this potentially ground-breaking initiative."

The Project's objectives are to facilitate development of new and improved vaccines by deciphering the "Human Immunome," all the genes and proteins associated with the human immune system, and elucidating the "Rules of Immunogenicity", ie, how humans generate effective immune responses with vaccines. Thus, the Project aims to address the common scientific obstacles preventing development of vaccines against major and emerging infectious diseases and cancers complementing ongoing disease- specific vaccine development efforts.

In July 2014, 20 business leaders from the public and private sectors reviewed the Project's mission and goals, and recommended the Project be structured as a global, nonprofit R&D consortium closely engaged with industrial partners, and affiliated with one or more academic centers conducting vaccine R&D (Expert Review of Vaccines, in press). The Project is currently in the process of establishing the principal hubs of such a consortium, including exploration of centers in the United States, Europe and Asia, to which leadership of the Project will then transition from IAVI, its initial catalyst.

"The Human Vaccines Project is driven by the rapid pace of technological advances in genomics, bioinformatics and structural and systems biology, and likely would not have been possible even five years ago. It is a tremendously exciting time in vaccinology as we move toward preventing very challenging global killers such as AIDS, TB, malaria, Ebola, and cancers. Science and innovation will get us the vaccines we need," said Mr Stanley Plotkin, Emeritus Professor of the University of Pennsylvania and Chairman of the Human Vaccines Project Steering Committee.