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Phase I clinical trial of the MinervaX GBS vaccine

I am delighted that clinical trials with a candidate GBS vaccine are about to commence in the UK. There is an urgent need for an effective GBS vaccine. Our previous work has shown that there is a significant global burden of GBS disease in infants, both in Developed as well as Developing countries. We also know from our ongoing surveillance that this burden persists in the UK despite national guidelines for prevention. It is clear that an effective vaccine given to pregnant women holds the greatest promise for preventing early and late onset GBS disease (including meningitis), GBS disease in pregnant women and potentially, the significant proportion of stillbirths, asphyxia and prematurity which may be due to GBS. We also know that pregnant women are now keen to receive vaccines, particularly when they are designed to protect their babies from serious infections.

The currently most advanced vaccine candidates are conjugate vaccines based on the capsular polysaccharide of GBS combined with proteins used in routine vaccines. The vaccine being used in this trial is a protein vaccine, made from the N-terminal domains of the Rib and AlphaC surface proteins of GBS. The vaccine appears to elicit strong and long lasting immune responses in animals, to protect against invasive disease in animals and to cover a wide range of clinical isolates. The latter is important because the current conjugate vaccines will be limited in coverage to 3-5 of the 10 possible serotypes that can cause disease in infants. These initial trials will assess the safety and tolerability of the new vaccine in healthy adult women as well as assessing the nature of the immune responses and identifying the optimal doses to be used in later trials.

I am delighted that clinical trials with a new GBS vaccine are being conducted in the UK and I look forward to seeing the results of this exciting programme. I hope that, if the results are favourable, clinical trials in the target group, pregnant women, will follow shortly thereafter and hope that these too will be in UK women.



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