

HEALTH

Epicentre on the trail of a vaccine adapted to Niger



Picture taken during the workshop

“To determine the morbidity and epidemiology of severe diarrhoea due to rotavirus in defined zones”: this was the principal objective of a three-year study carried out in two regions of Niger where rotavirus is the leading cause of severe gastroenteritis in young children. On 8 January 2013, in the wake of this conclusive study which has successfully demonstrated the preponderance of this cause of diarrhoea in children, Epicentre, which is actively involved in the search for a vaccine adapted to Niger and to industrialised and other developing countries also, organised a workshop in the Africa Hall meeting room to set forth its proposal for a study of the rotavirus vaccine, rotavac.

Epicentre was set up by MSF in 1987 to help it improve the quality of its interventions in the field. It is a non-governmental organisation that conducts medical research and develops and delivers training in the field of public health. The centre has a scientific team based in Paris made up of epidemiologists, biologists, statisticians and computer engineers. In 1996 it became a WHO collaborating centre for research in epidemiology and the response to emerging diseases.

Doctor Emanuel Baron believes that the study proposed by Epicentre - which conforms to existing protocols (and notably to accepted international standards and good clinical laboratory practices) – would be a valuable contribution to the development of a vaccine that would meet the needs of the population of Niger - and the rest of the world. And, in view of the promising findings presented to us by the head of Epicentre, it now just remains for the Ministry of Health to give its agreement in principle for the implementation of this crucial study which would be of such benefit to our populations.

On the basis of its experience of working with vaccine-preventable diseases and the results of its surveillance of diarrhoea in Niger, Epicentre supports the workings of its partner, the Serum Institute of India, which is currently developing the anti-rotavirus vaccine, rotavac, specifically adapted to the epidemiology and constraints of Sub-Saharan Africa. It therefore organised this presentation of the main findings of its three-year study (2009-2012), the rotavirus, existing vaccines and their characteristics in order to plead in favour of conducting a scientific study in the zones where the rotavirus vaccine is being experimented.

Given the high prevalence of rotavirus in children, especially those under one year suffering from diarrhoea and dehydration, the need for this new vaccine is a foregone conclusion.

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