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The recent development of dengue vaccination

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Abstract

Dengue has a vital health problem across the globe, approximately half of the world's population. The expanding burden of dengue has highlighted the need for new drugs and vaccines, to prevent dengue. Today it is the world's most crucial arboviral disease as number of people affected over the past 50 years. There were approximately 390 million infections in 2010. Due to globalization, trade, travel, demographic trends and warming temperatures it causes spreading of the primary vectors *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*, responsible to cause dengue. A tetravalent dengue vaccine demonstrated its protective efficacy in phase III studies. Results of studies were used to derive vaccination in the five Asian countries, wis-to-wis Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam. Moreover five Latin American countries were also involved wis-to-wis Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico and Puerto Rico. Dengue transmission were estimated, using data collection during the phase III studies, its parameters related to vaccine efficacy and levels of the disease. All vaccination programs explored significant reductions in dengue cases at the population level over the first 10 years followed by vaccination. The most efficient age for vaccination varied according to transmission intensity and 9 years was close to the most efficient age. The combinations of routine vaccination and large campaigns were organised so that a rapid reduction of dengue has been found after vaccine administration. Recently, the first dengue vaccine candidate was undergone in Phase 3 clinical trials and other vaccine candidates are under the clinical investigation. Lot of candidates are evaluated in preclinical development, based on diverse technologies, with satisfactory results in animal models. There is tremendous opportunity in clinical trials and eventually could results in be next-generation dengue vaccines.

Key words: Dengue, Vaccination, Development

Introduction

In 2013 the WHO ranked dengue as the fastest spreading vector-borne viral disease, with an epidemic potential. This expansion is believed to be due to global trade (increased transportation and expansion of the vectors), increased global travel (importations of dengue virus to new areas), and urbanization (multiple transmission opportunities from an infected mosquito), possibly enhanced by global warming [1]. Today, all five WHO regions are affected by dengue, with nearly 4 billion people believed to be at risk of dengue infection. The numbers of dengue cases submitted to WHO are underreported and many cases are misclassified because illness is mild or cannot be differentiated from other viral diseases that manifest high fever [2]. Worldwide, dengue is the most important vector-borne viral disease that is transmitted to humans by mosquitoes. The burden of disease has increased an estimated 30-fold over the past 50 years [3].

Globalization, trade, urbanization, travel, demographic change, inadequate domestic water supplies and warming temperatures are associated with the spread of the main vectors *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* [4]. *Aedes aegypti*, originally from Africa, and *Aedes albopictus*, from Asia, rapidly expanded their range over the past 50 years. Dengue virus (DENV) also spreads rapidly via infected travelers [5], whose numbers have increased over recent decades [6]. Climate change may lead to changes in these determinants of dengue transmission by multiple, inter-related mechanisms.

One recent prediction of the global burden suggests approximately 390 million dengue infections each year (95% credible interval 284–528), of which 96 million (C.I. = 67–136) are clinically apparent [7]. To date, specific dengue therapeutics are not available and disease prevention is limited to vector control and personal protective measures with little data to support their impact on clinical disease [8]. Thus, the development of a safe and effective dengue

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vaccine would represent a major advancement in the control of the disease

The development of a safe and effective dengue vaccine would represent a major advancement in the control of the disease. One candidate has been evaluated in Phase 3 trials in Asia and Latin America. The vaccine, a three-dose live recombinant tetravalent dengue vaccine based on the YF17D backbone (CYD-TDV), demonstrated efficacy in the first year of the observation period (from 28 days after the third dose) of 56.7% in Asia [9] and 60.8% in Latin America [10]. In longer-term hospital-based follow up, a signal of increased risk of severe and hospitalized dengue was identified in the 2–5 year age group in Asia, with a relative risk of hospitalized dengue in year 3 post-dose 1 of 7.45 (95% CI 1.15–313.80) [11]. The mechanism behind this increased risk is not understood [12], and the sponsor has recommended an indication for individuals 9+ years of age [13]. Second generation vaccines may improve on the range of the age indication, dose-scheduling, or efficacy, as well as contribute to vaccine supply security. This is an update of a 2011 review focusing on dengue vaccine candidates in preclinical development [14]. It is based on published data and written updates solicited from vaccine developers and researchers. Primary focus was given to candidates who are inactive development and have been evaluated in non-human primate (NHP) models (Table 1)

Disease and pathogen

Dengue virus is a single-stranded RNA virus in the genus *Flavivirus*, family *Flaviridae*. There are four distinct serotypes (DENV1–DENV4). They are antigenically diverse and only share about 60–75% identity at the amino acid level [15]. Due to genetic variations leading to changes in viral fitness, virulence, and transmission, serotypes and lineages may manifest different patterns of clinical disease and severity. The mature spherical dengue viral particle contains multiple copies of the three structural proteins (capsid, C, prM, the precursor of membrane, M, protein and envelope, E), as well as a host-derived membrane bilayer and a single copy of a positive-sense, single-stranded RNA genome. Human antibodies raised against the DEN virion are mostly targeted at the prM proteins. The virus is transmitted to humans by infectious bites of *Aedes* mosquitoes, in particular *Ae. Aegypti* but also *Ae. albopictus*. These vectors are urban day-biting mosquitoes, such that insecticide-treated bednets, which have been very important for malaria control, are ineffective [16]. Infected humans are the main carriers and multipliers of the virus, which then transmit DENV to uninfected

mosquitoes for subsequent transmission. The geographic distribution of dengue is determined in large part by the vector [17].

Overview of current efforts

Either Vaccines currently available and their limitations OR Biological feasibility for vaccine development In December, 2015, the first dengue vaccine, Dengvaxia® (CYD-TDV) developed by Sanofi Pasteur, was licensed in Mexico [18]. The vaccine was licensed in individuals 9–45 years living in endemic areas. CYD-TDV has since been licensed by several endemic countries National Regulatory Authorities (NRA). CYD-TDV is a 3-dose live recombinant tetravalent dengue vaccine administered on a 0/6/12 month schedule. It is based on the YF17D backbone, which is also the basis for the licensed JE vaccine IMOJEV [19]. CYD-TDV includes all three structural proteins, but because of the YF backbone, there are no dengue non-structural proteins included. This vaccine has been evaluated in two large pivotal Phase 3 trials in 5 countries in Asia and 5 countries in Latin America, in participants aged 2–16 across the two trials [20,21] A strong case for the feasibility of developing a dengue vaccine can be made based on the assumed life-long homotypic immunity conferred by natural infection [22]. Due to the theoretical risk of immune enhancement, the dogma has been that a tetravalent vaccine inducing a balanced immune response was needed [23]. The interim results of long-term follow up of CYD-TDV show these concerns to be relevant (though not confirmed), and ongoing/future development efforts will need to have practices in place to closely monitor for changes in risk, including in subgroups, and make all efforts to ensure the safety of trial participants [24].

General approaches to vaccine development

Markets Many dengue-endemic countries are middle-high income economies and provide a large market to drive development. Candidates under development are being designed primarily for use in endemic settings, which are predominantly low and middle income countries. For this reason and for easier implementation into immunization programs, there are efforts to minimize the number of doses needed, ideally for single-dose vaccines. One candidate vaccine has also been studied for having a low cost of goods [25] Live attenuated candidates under development have ongoing age de-escalation studies with a target lower bound of 1 or 2 years due to interference with maternally derived antibodies and ADE and are both currently being evaluated as single dose vaccines [26–29].

DNA vaccines

A tetravalent DNA vaccine candidate has been developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Transfection of the recombinant plasmid vectors into cultured cells has been shown to result in secretion of prM/E containing VLPs, which have an antigenic structure similar to DEN virions [30,31]. Immunogenicity of a tetravalent mixture of four monovalent DNA vaccines has been evaluated in NHPs. The tetravalent vaccine was found to stimulate a balanced immunity that lasted for 10 months and appeared to protect from viral challenge (J. Chang, personal communication), though the final results of the study have never been published. In a prototype DENV-1 DNA vaccine (D1ME100) Phase 1 clinical trial in humans [32], a minority of participants developed anti-dengue neutralizing antibody responses but IFN- γ T cell responses were frequently detected. As a result, the U.S. Naval Medical Research Centre (NMRC) is pursuing an approach of adjuvanting the tetravalent dengue DNA vaccine, which is composed of equal parts of monovalent plasmid DNA vaccines encoding the PrM and E genes [33–36], with the proprietary adjuvant Vaxfectin®. Vaxfectin® is a cationic lipid:neutral lipid combination [37].

Status of vaccine R&D activities**Preclinical pipeline**

The preclinical pipeline for dengue vaccines includes both conventional as well as novel technological approaches, including recombinant subunit vaccines, DNA vaccines, VLP vaccines, virus-vectored vaccines, purified inactivated virus vaccines, live attenuated virus vaccines, heterologous prime-boost approaches, and simultaneous administration with two technologically different vaccine candidates (Table 1) [47]. Approximately 20 candidates have been or are in the process of being evaluated in NHP models, with some expected to move soon into the clinic. Some novel approaches include a measles vaccine viral vector (Themis Bio-science) [48]

Clinical pipeline

In addition to CYD-TDV, two other tetravalent live recombinant vaccines, TV003/TV005 and DENVax,

have just begun or are close to beginning Phase 3 trials and do contain dengue virus non-structural proteins for at least one serotype [38]. TV003 and TV005 (which are identical except for the dosing level of the dengue 2 component) were developed by the US National Institutes of Health and are based on wild-type strains with genetic mutations to attenuate the virus [38]. Several monovalent candidates were first tested in Phase 1 trials to optimize each of the four vaccine virus strains [39]. Vaccine virus serotypes 1, 3, and 4 are based on complete viruses, while serotype 2 is a recombinant virus based on the serotype 4 vaccine strain with the structural proteins replaced by those of serotype 2. One dose of TV005 elicits seroconversion rates over 90% against each serotype, and 90% of flavivirus naïve recipients mounted a tetravalent response [40]. A number of other candidates and approaches have been or are currently under evaluation in Phase 1 trials (Table 1) [41]. These include a tetravalent purified inactivated vaccine (GSK) [42], a tetravalent recombinant subunit vaccine based on the dengue wild-type pre-membrane and truncated envelope protein (Merck) [43,44], a monovalent plasmid DNA vaccine (US Navy Medical Research Center) [45], and an inactivated vaccine/live attenuated vaccine heterologous prime boost (Walter Reed Army Institute of Research) [46].

Vaccination benefits for naïve subject

The vaccination benefits over 10 years for 9-year-old children vaccinated before any dengue infection is presented in Fig. 4a. In all countries for these children, vaccination translated into a reduction of dengue cases despite the lower protection conferred by vaccination and the potential of accelerated exposure to a second dengue infection. This reduction, which results from a combination of direct and indirect protection, ranges from 32% for Malaysia to 42% in Honduras. As expected the reduction was larger for all children vaccinated at age 9 years, i.e. seronegative and seropositive children. The results presented in Fig. 4b indicate reductions in dengue cases ranging from 58% to 68%.

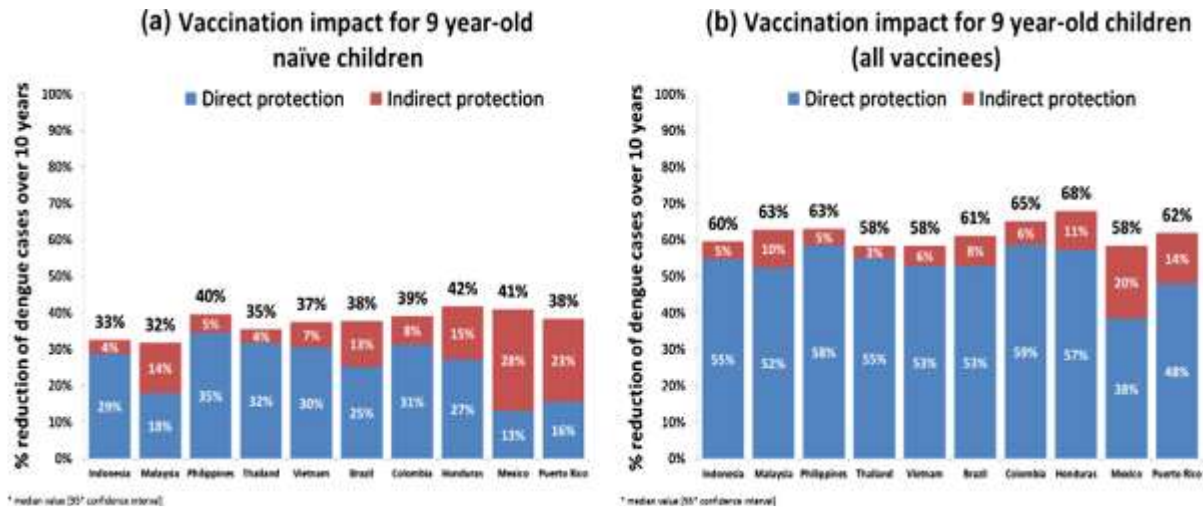


Fig. 4. Vaccination impact over 10 years for the first cohort of 9-year-old children receiving vaccination. (a) Children vaccinated when seronegative. (b) All vaccinate children. The vaccination program considered is a routine vaccination program at age 9 years combined with a catch-up campaign for those aged 10–17 years (8 catch-up cohorts). Vaccination coverage: 90%.

Conclusion

The World Health Organization recommended the use of mathematical models for vaccines. The analysis contributes to this effort. Routine vaccination from age 9 years was found to have a significant impact on dengue cases across. The combination of routine vaccination and catch-up campaigns provide an opportunity for a more rapid reduction in the dengue burden compared with routine vaccination alone. The reduction in the burden of dengue at the population level was obtained for scenarios of vaccine efficacy including the possibility of vaccine-induced cross-enhancement. Efforts to develop dengue vaccines have been ongoing for many years, but recent advances in vaccine science have greatly increased the technological options for dengue vaccine development.

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In parallel, molecular biology and systems biology permit more specific analysis of vaccine-induced immunogenicity and safety. However, possibly the most intriguing finding in relation to dengue vaccines over the past years comes from the first in class vaccine efficacy trial conducted with a yellow fever/dengue chimeric vaccine candidate. The observed mismatch between protective efficacy and neutralizing titres demonstrates our limited understanding of protective immunity in dengue and the shortcomings of our diagnostic assays to measure vaccine induced immunity [50]. While the vaccine community awaits more detailed analysis of the dengue vaccine efficacy trials, interest has been renewed in evaluation of early stage candidates, both in NHPs and human challenge studies [51,52]

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