

Partnership Lessons and Stories from the Trenches

Over the past several years, global health product development partnerships (PDPs) have blossomed. While it is still too early for many successes, some products are reaching late stage development. Of recent note, the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI), in partnership with GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Biologicals, announced that Phase II trial results out of Africa for their RTS,S vaccine indicate that it has a promising safety and tolerability profile and reduces malaria parasite infection and clinical illness due to malaria.

In a discussion on lessons learned, panelists from PDPs and industry described their views on the integration of the public and private sectors, how the skills that used to define big pharmaceutical companies or the public sector now cross cut, and how these emerging partnerships can be strengthened to further support the development and launch of new products for neglected tropical diseases.

Melinda Moree, former director of MVI, said these kinds of partnerships sprung up as mechanisms to fix something that was broken. "People were dying and there was a gap between the products meeting the world's needs," she explained. Since it was apparent that big pharma couldn't address these issues on its own, she explained, these PDPs were created.

Partnerships reduce the risk for industry—although, the hope is that one day the system will work on its own, and there will not be a need for groups to fill the middle space.

Kate Taylor, vice president of market access for GSK Biologicals, said that they

spend 40 percent of their budget on partnerships. She credits PDPs for helping gather data on disease epidemiology and for preparing ministries of health and developing world populations for the vaccines. In addition, having a partner like MVI, who provides financing for the vaccine, helps and complements the overall effort. In turn, MVI can take advantage of GSK's experience in clinical development and marketing expertise.

According to the panel, the elements of a good partnership include:

- Clear goals and objectives (not necessarily the same mission);
- Milestone-driven contracts;
- Clear roles and responsibilities that play to the strengths of each partner;
- Clear decision making processes, recognizing the fact that it's the company's product;
- Adequate funding (you can't raise money as you go) and
- Internal expertise in product development partnerships.

Panelists also discussed lessons learned. For example, PDPs need to deal concretely with what's on the horizon and then set a criteria to lead them forward after that stage.

In addition, Moree suggested that in the early stages of partnering, discussions are needed to set the expectation on both sides that if the partnership breaks up, each side will have access to what they've collectively learned so far in order to move forward.

MODERATOR:

Amie Batson
Senior Health Specialist
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PANELISTS:

Melinda Moree, PhD
Global Health Consultant
and Former Director
PATH Malaria Vaccine
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Alan Shaw, PhD
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