

Acambis joins forces with Bharat Biotech

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Acambis plc, which is based in Cambridge, UK and Cambridge, Massachusetts, has established a manufacturing and marketing agreement with Bharat Biotech International Limited of India relating to Acambis' ChimeriVax™-JE investigational vaccine against Japanese encephalitis (JE).

Under the new agreement, Bharat Biotech will be responsible for end-stage fill/finish processing of ChimeriVax-JE at its facilities in India and, once ChimeriVax-JE is approved, will market and distribute the vaccine in India and neighbouring countries.

JE, a virus transmitted to humans by mosquitoes, is the leading cause of childhood and viral encephalitis in Asia. Every year, there are an estimated 30000 to 50000 cases of JE, approximately 25-30% of which are fatal. Survivors are often left with serious neurological impairment.

Despite the availability of first-generation multi-dose JE vaccines for 60 years, the virus continues to cause death and disease. The World Health Organization and the Gates Foundation have identified a need for a second-generation, affordable JE vaccine that has an acceptable safety profile and requires fewer doses.

To meet this need, Acambis is conducting pivotal Phase III trials of a single-dose regimen of its ChimeriVax-JE vaccine candidate, which has the potential to transform the use of vaccines against JE by making them simpler, faster, easier and cheaper to administer.

Gordon Cameron, Chief Executive Officer of Acambis, said, 'The scale of the current epidemic in India has highlighted the critical need for a safe, efficacious and cost-effective vaccine against JE. We believe that the forthcoming Phase III trials of ChimeriVax-JE will demonstrate our vaccine can meet that need and Bharat Biotech is the ideal partner to help us maximise ChimeriVax-JE's reach in India and neighbouring countries. This collaboration is part of our strategy to establish ChimeriVax-JE as the optimum vaccine in endemic countries and I look forward to a long and fruitful relationship with Bharat Biotech.'