

On behalf of the VITAL consortium

EUROPEAN PROJECT “VACCINES AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN THE AGEING POPULATION” (VITAL) KICKS OFF

Utrecht and Bilthoven (the Netherlands), February 4, 2019 – Recently, the EU-sponsored Vaccines and Infectious diseases in the Ageing popuLation (VITAL) project was launched. VITAL will address - in a public-private consortium - the challenges of infections in the elderly and the potential of infection prevention by vaccination.

Within the [VITAL](#) project, which will run from 2019-2023, [University Medical Center \(UMC\) Utrecht](#) will be the managing entity and scientific lead. The € 12.4 million project is sponsored by the European Union’s [Innovative Medicines Initiative](#) (IMI) with a grant of € 5.5 million which will be matched by grants in total of € 6.9 million from the [European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries Associations](#) (EFPIA). The consortium academic leader is prof. dr. Debbie van Baarle, professor of Immunology of Vaccinations at UMC Utrecht and Head of the Department of Immune Mechanisms at the Centre for Immunology of Infectious Diseases and Vaccines at the [National Institute of Health and the Environment](#) (RIVM) in the Netherlands.

Multidisciplinary approach

Through a multidisciplinary public-private approach, VITAL will generate health, economic and societal benefits by mapping the disease burden of infectious diseases to be prevented by vaccines, Investigate immunity to infections and vaccinations in the aging population, calculate the clinical and economic consequences of possible vaccination strategies in different age and risk groups, and develop teaching tools for stakeholders.

The program is in line with recent recommendations from the European Council to strengthen cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases by working on cross-border vaccination programs and develop research and development studies for better understanding the benefit of life-long vaccination impact¹.

[Debbie van Baarle](#) explains: “An aging immune system is known to cause increased infection rates in elderly people. Prevention of infectious diseases in the elderly through vaccination is a requirement to promote healthy ageing in this growing population. Our main challenge, in close collaboration with our EFPIA partners, is to overcome the reduced immune responsiveness of this age group by improving the efficacy of vaccines and to identify new vaccination strategies to protect elderly people from infectious diseases.”

¹ [Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases, Brussels, 20 November 2018](#)

Burden of infectious diseases

Due to demographic developments, the population of elderly increases in size every year. Older people are more vulnerable to infectious diseases because their immune system becomes weaker with increasing age. As a consequence, an increasing burden of infections in the elderly is observed. Avoiding such infections by vaccination should delay, reduce, or avoid the exposure to institutionalized health care. In order to achieve optimal vaccination strategies for elderly or better protect elderly against infectious diseases, better insights are needed on how the overall process of ageing, exposure to infection, and immune response to vaccination, is developing and evolving.

Public-private Partnership

The partners in the international VITAL project include 7 academic research groups, 7 public health institutes, 3 private consultancy partners and 7 pharmaceutical industries with long-standing experience in epidemiology, health economy, clinical trials, immunology and public health.

Project details

Name: VITAL – Vaccines and Infectious diseases in the Ageing population
Start date: January 1, 2019
Duration: 60 months
Budget: €12.4mio
Coordination: University Medical Center (UMC) Utrecht

Contacts

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Note to the editor

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VITAL partners

Academic research groups: University Medical Center Utrecht (the Netherlands), University Medical Center Groningen (the Netherlands), University of Innsbruck (Austria), Imperial College London (United Kingdom), University College London (United Kingdom), University of Ferrara (Italy), University Jean Monnet (France)
Public health institutes: National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (the Netherlands), Norwegian Institute for Public Health (Norway), INSERM: French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (France), Statens Serum Institute (Denmark), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (France), Instituto Superiore di Sanita (Italy), FISABIO: Fundacion para el Fomento de la Investigacion Sanitaria y Biomedica de la Comunitat Valencian (Spain)
Private partners: P95 (Belgium), Syreon Health Institute (Hungary), Mihailovic Health Analytics (Serbia), Glaxo SmithKline Biologicals (Belgium), Pfizer (United Kingdom), Sanofi Pasteur (France), Merck Sharp & Dohme, (USA), Janssen Vaccines & Prevention (the Netherlands), bioMerieux (France), Vaccines Europe/EFPIA.

About University Medical Center Utrecht

University Medical Center Utrecht (UMC Utrecht) belongs to the largest public healthcare institutions in the Netherlands. UMC Utrecht has the ambition to be a leading international healthcare provider, medical school and research institute that is exciting for its people, attractive to talent and embodies a culture of teamwork, innovation, sustainability and high performance. As a patient-centered organization, its employees are dedicated to prevent disease, improve healthcare, develop new treatment methods and refine existing ones, with patient safety and quality as cornerstones. Strategic research programs are Brain, Child Health, Circulatory Health, Infection & Immunity, Cancer and Regenerative Medicine & Stem Cells. UMC Utrecht is embedded in a vibrant and entrepreneurial science community where knowledge about health, disease and healthcare is generated, validated, shared and applied. For more information, visit www.umcutrecht.nl or follow us on Twitter @UMCU_INTL.

About RIVM

RIVM works to prevent and control outbreaks of infectious diseases. We promote public health and consumer safety, and we help to protect the quality of the environment. RIVM collects and collates knowledge and information from various sources, both national and international. We apply this knowledge ourselves, and we place it at the disposal of policy-makers, researchers, regulatory authorities and the general public. Each year, RIVM produces numerous reports on all aspects of public health, nutrition and diet, health care, disaster management, nature and the environment. RIVM has a total of approximately 1,600 staff. For more information, visit www.rivm.nl.

About Glaxo SmithKline Biologicals

GSK – one of the world's leading research-based pharmaceutical and healthcare companies – is committed to improving the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer. GSK is one of the world's leading vaccine companies, involved in vaccine research, development and production. The company has 14 vaccines in development and its broad portfolio of 41 vaccines prevent illnesses such as hepatitis A, hepatitis B, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, measles, mumps, rubella, polio, typhoid, influenza and bacterial meningitis. Globally, GSK has more than 16,000 people working to deliver more than 2 (2.3) million vaccines every day, to people in 166 countries. For more information, visit www.gsk.com.



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