

MMV and LSTM collaborate to fill data gap on use of antimalarials during pregnancy

Geneva and Liverpool, 8 March 2020. On this International Women’s Day, the Swiss-based Product Development Partnership, Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) and Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) announce a collaboration to establish a pregnancy registry in malaria-endemic countries in Africa to help fill the data gap on the use of antimalarial medicines during pregnancy. The registry will be supported by MMV donors including a grant received from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

Artemisinin-based Combination Therapies (ACTs) are the standard of care for malaria, and are recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) for children and adults including pregnant women who are in their second and third trimester. Even though they are recommended by the WHO, limited data are available in second and third trimester for the more recently approved ACTs. In addition, ACTs are currently not recommended in the first trimester of pregnancy owing to a historic lack of safety data. However, there is evidence that a significant proportion of women seeking treatment for malaria in early pregnancy are treated with ACTs either because they do not know, or are unable to declare that they are pregnant.

In line with WHO and regulatory recommendations on the need to generate high-quality data on a continuous basis, the project will capture data through a prospective observational study on the real-life use of ACTs during all stages of pregnancy, including the first trimester. The study will be conducted in three countries across Africa with the goal of collecting enough safety and exposure data that, if positive, would allow for policy change on the use of ACTs in the first trimester of pregnancy.

The effort will also contribute to healthcare systems strengthening and capacity building, and encourage a sustainable pharmacovigilance culture in resource-constrained healthcare systems. Furthermore, in partnership with researchers and local regulatory authorities that are responsible for pharmacovigilance, a longer-term goal of the project is to develop a standard protocol and a network of sites that will collect safety data for all antimalarials and medicines for infectious diseases (e.g. HIV, TB) circulating in relevant endemic regions.

“Pregnant women are disproportionately affected by malaria – 29% of all pregnancies in sub-Saharan Africa were infected in 2018,” said Dr David Reddy, MMV’s CEO. “Yet their needs have not been fully addressed. We are delighted to be collaborating with LSTM to establish a pregnancy registry – a clear first step towards collecting the data necessary to support the medical needs of women suffering from malaria, during every stage of pregnancy.”

Professor Feiko ter Kuile, Head of the Malaria Epidemiology Unit at LSTM, said: “This new collaboration with MMV will give us the opportunity to gather much-needed data and provide a robust framework from which policy makers can make informed decisions that will benefit women when they are at particular risk of malaria, during pregnancy. The work will build on our extensive research and clinical experience in the field, and this pregnancy registry should allow us to gather safety data, not only on anti-malarials, but for drugs for the treatment of other infectious diseases that affect pregnancy.”

Notes for editors

About the topic

The latest WHO World Malaria Report stated that in 2018 an estimated 11 million pregnant women in sub-Saharan Africa – 29% of all pregnancies – were infected by malaria. Pregnancy reduces a woman’s immunity to malaria, making her more susceptible to infection and at greater risk of illness, severe anaemia and death. The disease also carries substantial risks for her unborn child; an estimated 900,000 children in Africa were born with low birth weight (a major contributor to infant mortality) due to malaria in pregnancy.

About the partners

Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) - MMV is a leading product development partnership (PDP) in the field of antimalarial drug research and development. Its mission is to reduce the burden of malaria in disease-endemic countries by discovering, developing and facilitating delivery of new, effective and affordable antimalarial drugs.

Since its foundation in 1999, MMV and partners have built the largest portfolio of antimalarial R&D and access projects ever assembled, have brought forward eleven new medicines and have assumed the access stewardship of a further two. An estimated 2.2 million lives have been saved by these MMV co-developed medicines. MMV's success is based on its extensive partnership network of around 150 active partners including from the pharmaceutical industry, academia and endemic countries.

MMV's vision is a world in which innovative medicines will cure and protect the vulnerable and under-served populations at risk of malaria, and help to ultimately eradicate this terrible disease.

For more information, please visit <http://www.mmv.org>

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Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) is the world's oldest centre of excellence in tropical medicine and international public health. It has been engaged in the fight against infectious, debilitating and disabling diseases since 1898 and continues that tradition today with a research portfolio over £320 million and a teaching programme attracting students from over 65 countries.

For further information please visit www.lstmed.ac.uk

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