



PHARMACEUTICALS EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL

(Set up by Ministry of Commerce, Govt. of India)

COPY

Date : 31-05-2010

News / Story reproduced with thanks:- **Pharmabiz**

Expert panel recommends introduction of 5-in-one vaccine under immunisation programme

Monday, May 31, 2010 08:00 IST

Ramesh Shankar, Mumbai

Direct link to the News/Story:-

<http://www.pharmabiz.com/article/detnews.asp?articleid=55709§ionid=>

The expert panel on the pentavalent vaccine, constituted by the Union Health Ministry to look into the issue of introduction of five-in-one or pentavalent vaccine under the national immunisation programme, has recommended to the government to introduce the controversial vaccine in the country in phases.

The expert committee, headed by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) director general Dr V M Katoch, has recommended to the government that the vaccine merits introduction in the country's immunisation programme in phases after studying the impact assessment in each phase.

The expert panel, which was asked by the ministry to examine the entire gamut of health issues related to the proposed introduction of the vaccine in the national immunisation programme, has submitted its report to the Union Health Ministry. "We have submitted the report to the government after studying the scientific part of the vaccine. Now, it is up to the government to take a final call on the issue of introduction of vaccine in the country's immunisation programme," Dr Katoch said.

The expert committee, headed by Dr Katoch, analysed all the five vaccines separately and the prevalence of the diseases covered by the vaccine in the country. The committee had constituted separate sub-committees on each of the five vaccines included in the pentavalent vaccine. Each sub-committee was headed by experts in the field and analysed each vaccine after collecting the scientific data. The sub-committees also examined the mortality rates caused by each vaccine in the country. The diseases covered by the five-in-one vaccine are diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), hepatitis B and haemophilus influenzae Type B (often known as Hib) which causes some severe forms of pneumonia and meningitis.

The health ministry set up the expert committee under Dr Katoch after the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI)'s recommendation to introduce pentavalent vaccine under the government's immunisation drive became controversial with the experts in the field airing doubts over the need for universal vaccination for some of the diseases covered by the vaccine.

There was widespread criticism in the country against the introduction of pentavalent vaccine under the government's immunisation programme. The critics were of the opinion that the vaccines, which are of questionable utility, expensive and also carry possible side-effects, are sought to be introduced at the cost of public exchequer at the behest of World Health Organization (WHO) and vaccine manufacturers.

Sanofi-aventis, Shantha Biotech, Serum Institute of India, Bharat Biotech and Panacea Biotech are among the major companies that had introduced pentavalent vaccines in the domestic market.