

Sanofi supplies injectable polio vaccine to government

OUR BUREAU

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Sanofi Pasteur and its affiliate Shantha Biotechnics are in the process of supplying their injectable polio vaccines, through UNICEF, to the Indian Government for its universal immunisation programme (UIP).

The development comes even as the Centre announced on Monday the inclusion of the injectable, inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) into the UIP. India has been officially certified as being polio free. But neighbouring Pakistan and Afghanistan still report cases of wild polio.

Sanofi Pasteur is the vaccines division of French drugmaker Sanofi and it has already supplied its Imovax Polio (IPV) to the Government programme. Sanofi said that the supply of ShanIPV manufactured by its Hyderabad-based affiliate Shantha Biotech would take place soon.

"With the introduction of IPV in their immunisation schedule, India moves the world much

closer to being polio-free," said Olivier Charmeil, President and CEO of Sanofi Pasteur.

"As a company deeply rooted in India, we are very proud that vaccines produced by both Sanofi Pasteur and Shantha will be used in this vital step towards a polio-free world. We have worked as partners of the government of India for many years, with this day in mind."

Over 20 million newborns will eventually benefit from this new vaccine every year, Sanofi said. November was the cut-off to introduce IPV in 17 high-risk States and four Union Territories.

In January next year, the IPV would be introduced in nine medium risk states and by March 2016, the IPV would be rolled out in six low-risk States.

Oral, injectable vaccines

Oral polio vaccines have been the key in the UIP, but the World Health Organisation recommends that the live OPV be supplemented and then replaced by

an inactivated IPV. OPV and IPV stimulate the body's immune system in slightly different ways so children who receive both should be even better protected against the disease, a note from the company said.

The OPV contains a mixture of live attenuated poliovirus strains. So, despite being safe, it is not advisable to be used after achieving a polio-free status: when polio no longer exists in the wild, live virus cannot still exist in a vaccine, the note explained.

Polio eradication

The universal introduction of IPV, a vaccine that has been used in many countries of the world for years, is a necessary step towards achieving a polio-free world by 2019 according to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative Endgame Strategic Plan.

Today, more than 110 countries have introduced IPV in their immunisation calendars, the note said.

Company