



PRESS STATEMENT

IMR12/12

PNG MEDICAL SYMPOSIUM 20124 September 2012

PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE: SAFE VACCINES FOR PNG CHILDREN

Modern medical research has produced many lifesaving vaccines; it has also produced methods of testing to make sure medicines do their job well.

Dr William Pomat, IMR's head of Infection and Immunity, is a part of an international team working to ensure PNG children are protected from pneumonia and other diseases caused by a germ called *Streptococcus pneumoniae*.

"When concerns were raised about non response to a small dose of pneumococcal polysaccharide in children who had previously received a full dose of pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPV), we decided to investigate," Dr Pomat said.

"The condition can occur when the child had earlier received a full dose of pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine, which would usually produce a good result," he said.

"When the child is exposed to a small dose that mimics exposure in the natural environment, the problem of non-responsiveness can occur.

"This is a real problem in PNG if pneumococcal vaccine is introduced into the national schedule and we find that after receiving their normal dose, the children do not respond well when they are exposed naturally.

"To investigate, we collected samples from children aged three to five years who had received PPV at nine months and tested their antibody responses after giving them a small dose of PPV. We also compared with those who had not received a vaccine previously.

"We found that children up to five years were able to naturally stimulate antibody responses after vaccination and also respond to the small dose of PPV.

"Importantly, there was no evidence of hypo-responsiveness found in children aged three to five," Dr Pomat said.

Symposium Paper: No evidence of hypo-responsiveness following challenge in 3-5 year old children vaccinated with pneumovax at 9 months.

Contributors: Pomat WS¹, Francis JP¹, Orami T¹, Siba P¹, Greenhill A¹, Phuanukoonnon S¹, Saleu G¹, Opa C¹, Lehmann D², Richmond P³. PNG PCV vaccine trials team.

Institutions: ¹PNG Institute of Medical Research, Goroka, ² Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Centre for Child Health Research, University of Western Australia, Perth, ³School of Paediatrics and Child Health, University of Western Australia, Perth.

Media contacts: Geraldine Vilakiva – phone: (+675) 532 2800 or (+675) 7205 6686
Email: geraldine.vilakiva@pngimr.org.pg Or phone Wendy Levy - +675-7201 7264