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Infectious  
Diseases

EDUCATION • PREVENTION • RESEARCH

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES KICKS OFF EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON VACCINE RESEARCH**

*World Health Organization's David Heymann Addresses Dilemmas in Global Public Health*

BALTIMORE, MD (May 9, 2005) – The world's largest scientific meeting devoted exclusively to research on vaccines and associated technologies for disease prevention and treatment through immunization was kicked off with a keynote address by the World Health Organization's David Heymann, MD. The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases' Annual Conference on Vaccine Research (ACVR) will run from May 9 to 11 in Baltimore, Maryland.

"The significant contribution of vaccines to improved public health is indisputable," according to Dr. Heymann. "While eradication of smallpox and the incredible progress we've made against polio worldwide are the most prominent examples of vaccine successes, literally dozens of other diseases would claim many millions of lives annually if not for vaccines."

Dr. Heymann, who represents the WHO's director general on polio eradication and was formerly executive director of WHO's communicable diseases cluster, addressed a broad range of current global public health concerns.

Highlights of his presentation included a discussion about how, had smallpox not been eradicated before the emergence of HIV, it might still be a threat today. The live-virus smallpox vaccine cannot be given to those with significant immunodeficiency because virus replication is enhanced in these persons, increasing the risk of personal illness and disease transmission to other unprotected persons.

Dr. Heymann also addressed polio, which is the next disease targeted for global eradication. He noted during the past 20 months, polio has spread to 16 polio-free countries from West Africa, the most recent being Yemen and Indonesia. Intensive efforts are underway in these countries, and the possibility of containing the imported virus is high. While recent intensification of global polio immunization efforts makes it feasible that transmission could be halted by the end of

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2005, it also leads to a dilemma – the trivalent oral polio vaccine being used for eradication worldwide would become the only source of polio (vaccine derived polio viruses (VDVP) or vaccine-associated paralytic polio), requiring that its use be discontinued. In its place a new vaccine, a monovalent polio vaccine, now provides greater immunity with fewer doses, increasing the feasibility of reaching the year end target of interrupting transmission.

He also addressed the challenges of vaccine discovery and the need for intensified research and development of new vaccines to combat newly emerging diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and avian influenza.

### **About NFID's Annual Conference on Vaccine Research**

NFID's vaccine research conference provides high-quality, current reports of scientific progress featured in both invited presentations and submitted abstracts that address the most recent scientific advances contributing to progress in the development of vaccines and that identify research opportunities and scientific challenges associated with vaccine development, production and distribution.

“The breadth of vaccine research covered at this meeting is truly extraordinary,” noted Dr. Susan J. Rehm, NFID's Medical Director. “This year's agenda covered everything from vaccine supply to agricultural bioterrorism to development of preventive and therapeutic vaccines for diseases including malaria, Alzheimer's, hepatitis C, diabetes and human papilloma virus.”

At this year's ACVR, the NFID presented the first Dr. Charles Mérieux Award to Kristin L. Nichol, MD, MPH, MBA, professor of medicine at University of Minnesota and chief of medicine and director of primary and subspecialty medicine service line, VA Medical Center, in Minneapolis. The award, which is presented to individuals with a demonstrated commitment to science-based medicine and research in infectious diseases, honors excellence in clinical and research activities and dedication to public health. The Dr. Charles Mérieux Award is made possible by an unrestricted educational grant to NFID by sanofi pasteur.

NFID's Annual Conference on Vaccine Research is held in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research of the Food and Drug Administration, Center for Vaccine Development of the University of Maryland, Fondation Mérieux, International Society for Vaccines, International Vaccine Institute, National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, The Netherlands Vaccine Institute, Albert B. Sabin Vaccine Institute, United States Department of Agriculture and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Founded in 1973, NFID is a non-profit organization dedicated to public and professional educational programs about infectious diseases.