

CEPI Partners with Themis Bioscience to Advance Vaccines Against Lassa Fever and MERS

-- First major investment by Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to advance vaccine development and manufacturing on two of CEPI's highest priority infectious diseases --

Vienna, Austria and Oslo, Norway, March 7, 2018 – Today [Themis Bioscience](#) and CEPI – the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations – announce a partnership under which Themis will provide advanced vaccine development and manufacturing for Lassa fever and MERS.

This is the first company agreement that CEPI has signed since it was established in 2017 as a coalition to finance and coordinate the development of new vaccines to prevent and contain infectious disease epidemics.

The investment of up to \$37,500,000 represents an innovative approach to funding vaccine development, unlocking research and development potential so that vaccines are ready for efficacy studies during an outbreak. The agreement will enable funding for Themis' development efforts over a five-year period. Additional financial details were not disclosed.

Lassa fever is a disease endemic in West Africa associated with annual outbreaks. An ongoing outbreak in Nigeria has resulted in 353 confirmed and probable cases this year alone. MERS, first identified in 2012, causes a severe respiratory illness and has been associated with a number of outbreaks in Saudi Arabia and neighboring countries.

Individuals acquiring these diseases in the regions of origin occasionally travel to other locations, becoming ill in areas outside the endemic regions. In 2015, for example, an individual returning to South Korea from the Middle East caused a large outbreak there that resulted in 186 cases and 36 deaths. The outbreak affected 24 hospitals, led to the temporary closure of more than 2000 schools, and had a significant impact on the South Korean economy.

Dr Richard Hatchett CEO of CEPI said:

“Establishing our partnership with Themis represents not only an important step in our journey towards tackling these diseases, but also a breakthrough in how we can partner and work with vaccine developers when traditional market incentives for development have failed.”

“As we can see with the current outbreak of Lassa fever in Nigeria, these diseases devastate lives and have far reaching economic consequences. Vaccines are a vital part of our fight against them but their development is costly, complex and challenging.”

Themis has established a versatile technology platform for the discovery, development and production of vaccines as well as other immune system activation approaches. The company will apply its platform technology to discoveries made by Institut Pasteur and the Paul Ehrlich Institut on Lassa fever and MERS, respectively, and will advance those vaccine candidates up to human proof-of-concept and safety studies.

Dr. Erich Tauber, CEO and founder of Themis said:

“This agreement is a substantial validation of our technology and capabilities. It also allows us to move several programs forward as part of CEPI’s initiative and in collaboration with leading institutions worldwide, which is an honor.”

“CEPI’s support will enable us to drive the development of these vaccines while we continue our own clinical and preclinical development programs.”

The investment with Themis is the first in CEPI’s planned portfolio programme. CEPI’s investments will support development up to the end of Phase II, providing clinical safety and immunological data, and the establishment of investigational stockpiles that will be ready for clinical efficacy trial testing during outbreaks. CEPI’s investments will also provide additional benefits to the wider vaccine community through the development of assays, reference standards and associated knowledge that may accelerate the development of other vaccines and medical counter measures against Lassa fever and MERS.

Themis’ most advanced proprietary development program is a vaccine against chikungunya virus, a mosquito-transmitted disease that can have serious debilitating long-term effects. The disease causes fever, joint pain and muscle pain, among other symptoms, and has no current treatment or prevention options. Themis’ chikungunya vaccine is in Phase 2 clinical studies in 600 patients across the US, EU and South and Central America. With its broadly applicable technology platform, Themis is also developing vaccines against Zika virus, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), norovirus and Cytomegalovirus (CMV), as well as other applications of harnessing the immune system to treat disease.

About MERS

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome is caused by the MERS-Corona virus, part of the same family of viruses that causes the common cold and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). It is transmitted from animals to humans and can be further transmitted by person to person contact. Symptoms include severe acute respiratory illness with fever, cough and shortness of breath as well as gastrointestinal symptoms, which can lead to death.

About Lassa Fever

Lassa fever is also known as Lassa haemorrhagic fever. The Lassa virus is transferred to humans from animals, most commonly by the Mastomys rodent. The virus can spread from person to person via bodily fluids and causes a range of symptoms including vomiting, swelling of the face, bleeding, and pain in the chest, back and abdomen.

About CEPI

CEPI is an innovative partnership between public, private, philanthropic and civil organizations. It was founded in 2017 by the governments of Norway, Germany, India and Japan, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Wellcome and the World Economic Forum. To date, CEPI has also received investment from the governments of Australia, Belgium, and Canada. It has reached \$630m of its target \$1bn funding. The European Commission has announced a contribution in kind of €250M that will support relevant projects through EC mechanisms. Since its launch in January 2017, CEPI has announced two Calls for Proposals. The first was for candidate vaccines against MERS, Nipah and Lassa viruses. The second was for the development of platforms that can be used for rapid vaccine development against unknown pathogens.

About Themis Bioscience

Themis is developing urgently needed vaccines to prevent death and disability around the world. We lead in the development of a vaccine against chikungunya, a serious debilitating disease with global outbreak potential. Our innovation in vaccine and immune activation technology has created a powerful platform and a growing pipeline addressing a broad range of infectious diseases. Together with industrial and academic leaders we work to prevent illness across the globe. For more information, visit <http://www.themisbio.com>.

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