Final Report

PROJECT
LATIN AMERICAN NETWORK FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION ON VACCINES

Havana, Cuba
November, 2007
PGTF
THE PEREZ-GUERRERO TRUST FUND FOR ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

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Report
(2005-2007)

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ABSTRACT:

The “Latin American Network for Scientific and Technical Information on Vaccines” project was approved in 2005 by the Group of 77’s Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund (PGTF). It was included in a package of technical cooperation and economical stimulus for the developing countries, involving a loan from the Fund of US $35,000. The project is being coordinated by the Finlay Institute and the participating nations are Ecuador, El Salvador, Colombia and Cuba. After two years of implementation, the project has achieved significant results (see attached reports and other documents). However, taking advantage of the infrastructure already created, we now propose to enhance and extend the vaccines network to Latin America.

COUNTRY: Inter-Regional.

SUBMITTED BY: Finlay Institute. Centre for Research/Production of Vaccines, Cuba.

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TOTAL COST OF THE PROJECT: US $338,957.60

FFPG INPUTS: 35,000.00 USD
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I. Introduction

The project “ATLAS 00044062 INT/05/K10: Latin American Network for Scientific and Technical Information on Vaccines”, approved and funded by the Trust Fund for Economic and Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (PGTF) at a session in 2005, has completed two years' implementation. The participating countries are Ecuador, El Salvador, Colombia and Cuba; represented by the officially-participating institutions that include the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil, Don Bosco University, DELTA Laboratories and the Finlay Institute. Also, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Cuba, and its programme official Mariana Mansur have provided technical advice.

The background for the inception and development of this project was described in detail in the initial document submitted for appraisal by the Experts’ Committee at the first session (ATLAS code: 00044062 INT/05/K10). This document is also available on the website ‘Biblioteca Virtual en Vacunas’ (BVV) (http://www.bvv.sld.cu/rlictv/), in the section dealing with the coordination and development of the project.

The question of the credibility of the information was only one of the problems highlighted in the project document (http://www.bvv.sld.cu/rlictv/), and was addressed with the implementation of the Latin American Network for Scientific and Technical Information on Vaccines. Other difficulties mentioned in the report included the following:

1. Scientific/technological knowledge in the field of vaccines is dispersed; much of it is inaccessible to others on the region.
2. There is little cooperation between health’s professionals of the area who are involved with vaccines. This could be due to a lack of information about the thematic their colleagues are working on.
3. Few local publications reach an international readership. This implies poor visibility of the research work undertaken on the region.
4. There is scant development of science support services, e.g. libraries, consultancy services, statistics, etc.
5. Insufficient awareness of issues related to technological innovation, licensing and patenting on the part of the personnel of the region's scientific institutions.
6. Inadequate communication between the scientific community and the rest of the society.
7. Limited information among health-sector professionals (nurses, auxiliaries, students, etc.) regarding the latest advances in the field of vaccines, trends, transportation needs, storage requirements, immunization programmes, etc.

Other matters assessed as a consequence of the above include technical issues and other similar projects, such as the BIREME/PAHO Virtual Health Library (http://www.bireme.br/) and the Latin American & Caribbean Medical Science Information System. Other regional initiatives were appraised from the viewpoint of their content and the information services they offer, such as the Regional Vaccination System organized by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/World Health Organization (WHO). Also the WHO’s extended programme on immunization and the supply of vaccines was reviewed. In each of these areas, coordination efforts were made and work was started on the basis of regional integration via cooperation with other networks.

II. Goals achieved.

1. Introduction and maintenance of a reliable information service, involving personnel accredited in the field (of vaccines). This was set up with the Virtual Vaccines Library (http://www.bvv.sld.cu/). (Appendix 1).
4. Creation of a formal framework (Vaccine Network) to promote cooperation in vaccinology across the region; based on knowledge management and the productivity of a community with similar interests (Appendix 4).
5. Dissemination of the results of scientific/technical efforts of the countries of the region (Appendix 5).
6. Quantitative and qualitative improvement of the Internet-based health-sector material in Spanish, accompanied with a technical support service for health-
sector professionals and the public at large in matters related to vaccines. (Appendix 6).

7. Resolution of urgent health-sector issues associated with the field. (Appendix 7)
8. Availability to users of analytical studies and reports on the various aspects of vaccinology on the region (Appendix 8).

The results also included holding various work meetings, of administrative nature, with the project's regional representatives. Among these were sessions with Alejandro Castaño, from Colombia and Oscar Duran, from El Salvador. There was also a visit of one of the project's expert co-workers, from Mexico.

A special focus this year was on extending the network, its products and services, via chat sessions, leaflets, events, lectures, workshops and courses (see Appendix 9, results section).

Also, statistics of access to the site (http://servicios.sld.cu/webalizer/www.bvv.sld.cu) show that the original aim of the project is being achieved, namely that of providing services to three kinds of user: scientist-researchers, personnel within the public health systems and the public at large.

Currently, the majority of the users/information-providers are those located in the complex of scientific/technological institutions located west of Havana and the hospital doctors who access the network via INFOMED's Intranet; in other words, Cuban users. Mexico occupies second place, followed by Peru, Argentina, Colombia, Spain and Brazil. Despite of have been conceived in Spanish and aimed at Latin America, the network's services are accessed heavily also from the UK (ranks No.10 for access in recent months), Canada (No.11) and Denmark (No.12). African and Asian visitors include those from Ghana (No.13), Kenya (No.30) and Japan (No.29). All these countries access via INFOMED's servers.
Importantly, one of the biggest users of the network is the general public. Mothers and fathers pose questions on vaccination to the experts: about side effects, changes to vaccination schemes, compulsory vaccinations, etc. (See Appendices). Significantly also, contacts seeking e-training primarily originate in countries like Argentina and Uruguay, reflecting the level of need.

The development platform for the project is based on open software, with the aim of creating an end product that will function in any operating environment or with any operating system (i.e. does not depend on the platform on which it was developed). The combination we have identified as the most promising for web applications is PHP+MySQL+Apache, with Linux as the server-side operating system. More information on the technical features of the system is provided in the annual report, accessible at [http://www.bvv.sld.cu/rlctv/](http://www.bvv.sld.cu/rlctv/)

The project to establish the Latin American Network for Scientific and Technical Information on Vaccines is complete. However, the interest and impetus it has acquired in its first year of operation call for its perpetuation and expansion; beyond the limits of the project as originally envisaged.

### III. Results.

A). **Publications associated with the project. (Appendix 9)**


Convenciones de La Habana, Cuba, del 17 al 21 de abril del 2006.


B). Events to which it has been submitted. (Appendix 9)


10. Guzmán, María V.; Calero, Romel.; Velázquez, Carlos.; Martí, Alay.; Álvarez, Ivet.; Pimienta, Bertha. RED LATINOAMERICANA DE INFORMACIÓN CIENTÍFICO –


C). Exhibits, leaflets, radio, television and other outreach activities. (Appendix 9)


17. XIV Congreso Científico Internacional del Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas CNIC 2005. En el Stand del Instituto Finlay se distribuyeron folletos del Proyecto.


20. Diseño y edición de tres Gigantografías para la divulgación del sitio y ambientar en las diferentes actividades realizadas y las futuras.

D). Training users. (Appendix 9)


E). Tesis. (Appendix 9)


F). Awards. (Appendix 9)


G). Letters of support. (Appendix 9)

National

1. Presidente de la Sociedad Cubana de Inmunología.

3. Presidenta de la Sociedad Cubana de Bibliotecarios.
4. Presidenta de la Sociedad Cubana de Ciencias de la Información.
5. Presidenta del Grupo Nacional de Alergología
6. Coordinador de Brigada Médica Cubana en Trinidad y Tobago.
7. Consultoría Biomundi. Instituto de Información Científico – Técnica. CITMA.
8. Policlínico Comunitario Ceiba del Agua. Municipio Caimito
9. Comercializadora de Vacunas. Vacunas Finlay S. A.
10. Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina (ELAM)
12. Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas (CNIC)
13. Instituto de Medicina Tropical “Pedro Kouri” (IPK)
15. Vicedirector del Centro Nacional de Información de Ciencias Médicas.
16. Centro Provincial de Información de Ciencias Médicas. (La Habana)

**Latin American Organizations**

17. Fundación para la Ciencia y la Tecnología (FUNDACYT), Ecuador.
19. Director de la Biblioteca Central “Rafael Mesa Ayau”. El Salvador.
20. Centro de Investigación y de Estudios Avanzados del Instituto Politécnico Nacional. (CINVESTAV)

**IV. Coordination arrangements for this project.**

The first report of the Latin American Network for Scientific and Technical Information on Vaccines is, we believe, one of various ways of securing implementation and ensuring communication between the parties (Steering Committee, Project Management Committee, User Committee). In the second year, is added to the above provisions establishing Regional Consultative Committee and an Experts Group.

**Experts Group**

This shall be made up of scientists and professionals distinguished in the field of vaccines. It underwrites the opinions promulgated via the Virtual Library in Vaccines
(BVV) and deals with complex queries and problems, such as debates over differences of opinion or controversial issues. In such cases, they may be consulted about either question.

**Regional Consultative Committee**

Comprises individuals elected on personal merit and on the strength of their track record in the fields of public health, vaccinology, epidemiology, immunology or related disciplines. The members will be from countries of the (Latin America & the Caribbean) region. Their tasks will include:

- Promoting the aims of the network in their respective nations.
- Where appropriate for achieving the objectives, setting up national committees in their countries.
- Making technical recommendations to the institution responsible for the project.
- Providing technical consultancy to the general coordinator of the project.

**IV. Final Considerations.**

The results achieved in this case are incentive to provide continuity to this project. One of the aspirations for 2008 is to achieve greater integration of the network with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. To accomplish this, it is important the support from the government’s institutions concerned with the issues associated with health and vaccines; as well as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and its related organization projects of information resources, such as BIREME.

Three basic aims have been identified for this new stage:

1. Enhance the network for the benefit of the rest of the countries on the region which are making progress in the field of vaccines and immunology (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela, in addition to those already covered by the project), in terms of content production and introduction; as well as the implementation of their Virtual Vaccine Libraries.
2. Set up a specialized portal to marshal various vaccine resources. Transiting from a robust website to a portal calls for reliable methods for navigating and pinpointing information.

3. Implement a Virtual Vaccinology Classroom, outside the Internet, to provide training for the region's health-sector personnel.

In addition, one main objective shall be work in compliance with the standards of the Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS), established by WHO in 1999. Therefore, one of the goals for next year will be submit the site for their assessment and its certification as a resource that provides secure information in the field of Vaccinology. (For more information see www.who.int/vaccine_safety/)
Appendix 1. Virtual Vaccines Library (BVV).

Sitie: http://www.bvv.sld.cu
Appendix 2. Virtual Vaccinology Classroom (In Spanish: AVV).

Appendix 4. Creation of a formal framework (Vaccine Network).

General information about the project.

Examples of the contributions of the partners that make up the network.
Appendix 4. Disseminating scientific output generated by the countries of the region.

Service scientific publications (books, papers, journals, patents, thesis, etc.)
Appendix 6. Visits to the BVV by the countries.

Chart 1: Visits to the BVV (January 2007-September 2007) by the countries of the Iberoamerican region.

Chart 2: Visits to the BVV (January 2007-September 2007) by country that do not speak spanish.
Appendix 7. Resolution of urgent health-sector issues associated with the field.

Sample question from Latin America

Response by one of the experts of the project.
Appendix 8. Availability to users of analytical studies and reports on the various aspects of vaccinology on the region.

Example: Assessment about the state of the art on the theme of vaccines *Helicobacter pylori.*