

# ConserV Bioscience ARBO-SAL project has been awarded UK Aid funding by the UK Vaccine Network, delivered by Innovate UK

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, January 16, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [ConserV Bioscience](#) Limited ("ConserV"), a clinical-stage biotechnology company focused on developing vaccines that protect against endemic and emergent infectious diseases, has been awarded UK Aid funding to advance development of its arbovirus vaccine platform, ARBO-SAL.

The project (10083718) was selected by the UK Vaccine Network (UKVN) for the award under the competition "SBRI: Vaccine development for potential endemic diseases state 1". This research was funded by the Department of Health and Social Care as part of the UK Vaccine Network (UKVN), a UK Aid programme to develop vaccines for diseases with epidemic potential in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). ConserV was also awarded a second contract to advance pre-clinical evaluation of UNICOR-v (10086291), a pan-coronavirus vaccine, under the competition in which a total of 16 out of 59 applications were funded.

ConserV Bioscience seeks to build on the previous success of its mosquito-borne diseases vaccines, AGS-v PLUS, by developing a second-generation novel vaccine with a two-prong defence against mosquito-borne arboviruses. The platform, known as ARBO-SAL, is made of two



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components: a set of antigens specific for the arbovirus of interest (ARBO), in this case ARBO-z for ZIKV and ARBO-c for CHIKV and a set of salivary antigens found in Culex and Aedes mosquitoes (SAL). The first line of defence is to modify natural host's immune responses to mosquito saliva to make the environment at the bite site hostile to the pathogen, and the second is that those pathogens that escape the bite site could be destroyed by pathogen-specific cellular and humoral immune responses able to recognise the pathogens or pathogen-infected cells. The aim is to generate a synergistic effect on vaccine efficacy by combining salivary antigens and virus-specific antigens. In this project, ConserV is working closely with the [University of Leeds](#) and [KU Leuven](#) (Belgium) who will conduct the efficacy studies in ZIKV and CHIKV, respectively.

Zika and chikungunya are mosquito-borne viruses with epidemic potential, and both are transmitted by the bite of infected Aedes female mosquitoes. Zika and chikungunya outbreaks have been reported in South and Central America, the Caribbean, the Pacific islands, Africa, and Asia. There is a risk that these viruses will spread geographically by infected travellers and by the expansion of Aedes' habitat due to global warming and deforestation. Aedes mosquitoes are also carriers of dengue and yellow fever viruses whereas viruses such as West Nile, St. Louis encephalitis, and Japanese encephalitis are mainly transmitted by Culex mosquitoes.

Kimball Duncan, CEO of ConserV Bioscience, commented: "We look forward to building on the success of our first-generation mosquito-borne diseases vaccine, AGS-v PLUS, which primarily targets the mosquito that transmits the causative agent for malaria, by expanding mosquito and pathogen coverage with ARBOSAL. We are grateful to the UKVN and Innovate UK for being selected for this award which will help us advance the development of our ARBO-SAL vaccine platform."

Dr. Olga Pleguezuelos, Chief Science Officer of ConserV, commented: "We are excited to advance ARBOSAL and generate substantial preclinical immunogenicity and efficacy data with UKVN's and Innovate UK's support. Dr. McKimmie and Prof. Delang bring to the project extensive knowledge and expertise on arboviral models of infection incorporating mosquito saliva. Our approach to mosquito borne diseases is highly innovative and could be adapted to generate new vaccines or improve existing vaccines against other diseases transmitted by the same mosquitoes such as dengue and yellow fever".

Dr. Clive McKimmie, Associate Professor at University of Leeds, commented: "Vaccines that provide protection against mosquito-borne viruses, an increasingly important group of infectious agents, are urgently required. This revolutionary approach of targeting both mosquito-derived factors and components of the virus in one vaccine, has potential to identify vaccines that afford enhanced protection from infection. Such protection could have a significant positive impact for the many millions of people that are at risk from infection with these viruses."

Dr. Leen Delang, Assistant Professor at KU Leuven, commented: "Mosquito saliva plays a significant role in virus transmission and pathogenesis in the host. Combining mosquito salivary

components with a viral antigen is a very interesting approach that holds promise for the development of efficient vaccines which are highly needed for mosquito-borne viruses.”

Ends

Kimbell Duncan

ConserV Bioscience

+41 79 883 78 90

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