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### Cuba to Increase Vaccine Production

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With new products being researched and developed at the Finlay Institute, the renowned scientific institute in East Havana, Cuba will increase its production of vaccines against a number of infectious diseases over the course of the coming decade.

Doctor Hilda Garcia told **The Havana Reporter** that the scientific institution is in the process of merging with the Center for Bio-molecular Chemistry, from which the new Finlay Vaccine Institute will emerge.

The establishment will, through research and production until 2025, develop seven conjugated preventive vaccines against bacterial infections and a therapeutic cholera vaccine (a strain of *Vibrio cholera* o1, bio-type El Tor serotype Ogawa) which is in its second clinical trial phase.

This is a single dose oral vaccine with an attenuate active micro organism that, once in the gastrointestinal tract, generates a protective immune reaction against the epidemic.

A meningococcal conjugate vaccine for sero-groups A, C, Y, W, and X, and another against *Streptococcus pneumonia* which is presently undergoing the clinical trial phase, are also contemplated.

These are based on micro organisms that cause pneumonia, bacteraemia, sepsis, otitis media, and meningitis.

Along similar lines, a conjugate vaccine for Typhoid fever — of which there are 26.9 million cases

per year globally, above all in south-east Asian nations — is also expected.

The institution will continue to produce vaccines that form part of the Ministry of Health's national immunization scheme. Almost half a million Cuban children were vaccinated during the 54th National Polio Vaccination Campaign this year. Between the eradication of polio in 1962 and 2014, 83 million doses of the vaccine were administered.

According to the Health Ministry's National Immunization Program adviser, Miguel Angel Galindo, prior to the triumph of the Revolution only yellow fever and smallpox had been eradicated in Cuba, in 1908 and 1923, respectively.

The nation now remains by virtue of vaccinations free from six preventable diseases and some serious types of other conditions, while tetanus, type B Haemophilus influenzae meningitis, and meningococcal disease, with infection rates of less than 0.1 per 100 inhabitants, no longer represent health problems.

Morbidity and mortality rates associated with Typhoid Fever and Hepatitis B have also dropped significantly.

A range of 26 Cuban bio-technological products for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of 26 conditions were on display recently at an international scientific congress in Havana's Convention Palace, attended by 300 researchers from more than 60 Cuban institutions and a further 250 from more than 30 foreign countries.

The Center for Genetic and Bio-Technological Engineering in Havana presented their list of products at the "Bio-pharmaceutical Products: Third Century Challenges" fair which was held in conjunction with the aforementioned congress, for the treatment of conditions such as Hib Meningitis, Hepatitis B and C, chronic myeloid leukaemia, and multiple Myeloma.

Other illnesses included are melanomas, basal cell skin carcinoma, cutaneous and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, kidney cancer, and bladder, non-iron deficiency anemia, recurrent respiratory papillomatosis, hemorrhagic conjunctivitis, acute myocardial infarction, diabetic foot ulcers, cellular immunodeficiency, Herpes zoster, and burns.

The scientific institution, which also produces HIV, Hepatitis C, pregnancy rota-virus, and celiac disease testing kits, has 236 health products approved in 57 countries while its exports reach more than 35 nations.

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