

PNEUMONIA

Parliament unites to tackle global problem

The study by Asghar et al and the accompanying editorial by Bhutta remind all of us that much more can and must be done to control pneumonia and pneumococcal disease world wide.^{1,2} The All Party Parliamentary Group on Pneumococcal Disease Prevention in the Developing World was formed last month to tackle the devastating impact of pneumonia on child survival. The group is committed to raising awareness of pneumococcal disease and pneumonia, vaccination strategies, and sustainable financing mechanisms among MPs and peers nationally, across Europe, and around the world.

As Bhutta notes, given increasing resistance to antibiotics in the long term, the most cost effective means of reducing child mortality from pneumonia is to scale up effective preventive strategies, most notably vaccination. Pneumococcal conjugate vaccines are safe and highly effective in preventing pneumococcal pneumonia and meningitis.

GAVI's PneumoADIP is working to accelerate the introduction of these vaccines so that they can start saving lives now. The advance market commitment (AMC) is an innovative financing mechanism with the potential to save millions of lives by accelerating access to vaccines that would not otherwise be available to children for many years.

The UK government—together with the governments of Italy, Canada, Norway, and Russia, and the Bill and Melinda

Gates Foundation—has already pledged \$1.5bn (£0.8bn; €1bn) for the first AMC for pneumococcal vaccines. Through the AMC there is the potential to save the lives of 5.4m children by 2030.

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- 1 Asghar R, Banajeh S, Egas J, Hibberd P, Iqbal I, Katep-Bwalya M, et al, for the SPEAR (Severe Pneumonia Evaluation Antimicrobial Research) Study Group. Chloramphenicol versus ampicillin plus gentamicin for community acquired very severe pneumonia among children aged 2-59 months in low resource settings: multicentre randomised controlled trial (SPEAR study). *BMJ* 2008;336:80-4. (12 January.)
- 2 Bhutta ZA. Managing severe pneumonia in children in developing countries. *BMJ* 2008;336:57-8. (12 January.)