

## Sierra Leone: Traditional and Religious Leaders to Champion New Ebola Vaccine Study in Sierra Leone

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Freetown, 20, 2015 (MOHS) –Tribal Heads, Religious Leaders and Ward Councillors in the Western Area have been briefed about the new Ebola Prevention Vaccine (marklate) to be introduce in Sierra Leone in March this year.

Addressing the stakeholders meeting at the Miatta Conference Hall in Freetown on Thursday February 2015, the Acting Provost, Principal College of Medicines and Allied Health Sciences and Principal Investigator, Dr. Mohamed Samai told his audience that the vaccine is important because it might help protect people from getting Ebola during this outbreak and future ones in helping to save lives.

The goal of the study in Sierra Leone, Dr. Samai said, aims at evaluating how well an Ebola prevention vaccine helps protect people from getting Ebola, and to expand the safety profile of the vaccine from previous smaller studies. This and other Ebola prevention vaccines he said are being studied in other African countries, the USA, Canada and Europe.

Commenting on the time line, Dr. Samai said it is expected that the study will begin early March 2015 after obtaining the necessary approvals that ensures national and international safety and ethical standards, adding that the study has already been approved by the Sierra Leone Ethics and Scientific Review Committee, Ministry of Health and Sanitation. “Approvals are also pending from the Pharmacy Board of Sierra Leone, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the CDC Institutional Review Board”.

“These approvals, including using the rsvv-ZEBOV Vaccine, are expected in the next few weeks”, affirmed Dr. Samai.

The study districts are Western Area and chiefdoms in the Bombali, Port Loko, Tonkolili because these are the severely affected Ebola districts in the past few months.

Participants that are eligible to the vaccine are health care workers noting that their jobs put them at higher risk of getting Ebola.

“Until the study begins, study leaders would continue to engage leadership at the national, district, and community level. These engagements include Paramount Chiefs, Tribal Heads, Religious Leaders, Ward Councillors, and Elders in the study areas. The press has been targeted for sensitization, education and awareness raising.

The Health Education Manager and Chairman for the occasion, Mr. Lansana Conteh underscored the importance of the vaccine in places where Ebola outbreaks are happening as it would help protect people from getting the disease.

He described the role of Traditional and Religious Leaders, and Ward Councillors in sensitizing and educating their various communities about the new vaccine as very crucial in achieving the desired goal of the study in Sierra Leone, and thanked them for their continued support in the fight to contain the disease.

The study in Sierra Leone is in partnership with USA Centre for Disease Control (CDC, COMAHS, University of Sierra Leone and the National Public Health Service.

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