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Merck to accelerate global access to affordable vaccines

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Collaboration with Oxford University to develop cost-effective vaccine manufacturing processes, accelerate vaccine availability.

Merck, a leading science and technology company has announced a partnership with Oxford University's Jenner Institute to develop more robust and scalable vaccine manufacturing processes. This partnership, as well as plans to develop a vaccine manufacturing facility in Ghana, further the company's commitment to improving global health by making vaccines more affordable and available.

"The collaboration with the Jenner Institute will facilitate access to affordable vaccines while improving the global response to disease outbreaks," said Udit Batra, Member of the Merck Executive Board and CEO, Life Science. "Merck is committed to expanding access to advanced drug therapies, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Together with our partners we have shaped how vaccine production is done today and are helping to solve the toughest problems oftomorrow."

Through the collaboration with the Jenner Institute, the partners will improve the manufacturing process for adenovirus vaccines — vaccines based on adenovirus, a type of DNA virus, as a carrier — using Merck products, systems and technologies on a real-world feed stream. By applying Merck technology, the collaborators aim to develop a cost-effective and transferable manufacturing process that can be used to accelerate vaccine development and manufacturing worldwide.

"Merck is an excellent partner for enhancing our capabilities in adenovirus vaccine development, as the newly developed process should match or exceed our existing process in terms of productivity and purity," said Adrian Hill, Director of the Jenner Institute at Oxford University.

The collaboration should result in a closed process that can be practiced in a cleanroom to minimize contamination, in line with the high biological safety requirements for viral vectors.

"Such improvements should help advance the development of clinical-grade, injectable drug product for use in clinical trials

and other research applications," Hill added.

Merck building vaccine facility in Ghana

Separately, Merck is developing plans for a vaccine manufacturing facility in Ghana, helping to address significant health challenges in a continent that imports 99 percent of its vaccines. Working with Ridge Management Solutions, a recently signed memorandum of understanding between Merck and Ridge provides the opportunity for Ghana to become the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to have a dedicated human vaccine manufacturing factory.

"We want to support emerging economies by sharing our expertise, helping them streamline their manufacturing processes while supporting technology transfer and local facility startup," Batra added.