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Novo Nordisk Foundation commits up to $260 M to establish research and vaccine development initiative

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Major new vaccines initiative aims to fight deadly airborne infections



Denmark-based Novo Nordisk Foundation is committing up to DKK 1.8 billion ($260 million) to establish a state-of-the-art research and vaccine development initiative. The aim is to create new or improved vaccines for some of the deadliest respiratory diseases, including tuberculosis (TB) and influenza.

Developed in partnership with the University of Copenhagen, it is the first vaccines initiative globally to focus solely on understanding how to generate immunity in the airway itself. This is a potentially revolutionary means to block infection and prevent airborne diseases spreading between humans. A key partner in the initiative will be Denmark's Statens Serum Institut (SSI).

Research at the Novo Nordisk Foundation Initiative for Vaccines and Immunity (NIVI) will focus initially on TB, influenza and Group A Streptococcus (GAS), which collectively cause more than 2.5 million deaths per year. There is currently no licensed GAS vaccine, while the only available TB vaccine does not prevent lung disease in adolescents and adults, and influenza vaccines have limited efficacy and provide only short-term protection.

The Foundation has also established a limited liability company – the Novo Nordisk Foundation Vaccine Accelerator (NVAC). NVAC will enable and enhance the work of Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Vaccines and Immunity (NCVI) by licensing and developing vaccine technologies, preparing vaccine formulations, reagents and assays, and coordinating the external clinical-grade production and clinical testing of promising vaccine candidates. Any revenue generated by NVAC will be reinvested in NIVI.

The development of NIVI is planned in two phases. Phase I (2024-2027) will involve staff recruitment, the development of new international partnerships, and the initiation of key research programmes. By Phase II (2028-2031), NIVI will be fully scaled and comprise 150-200 staff members based in Copenhagen.