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Singapore: Aeras, a nonprofit biotech advancing TB vaccines for the world, the University of Oxford and Okairos, a biopharmaceutical company specializing in T-cell vaccines, have announced a $2.9 million grant to Aeras in support of a collaboration among the three parties to support the development of vaccines against tuberculosis, HIV and malaria.

The grant, provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, allows the three groups to work together to develop scalable methods to enable large-scale production of multiple novel chimpanzee adenovirus vector constructs.

"We are pleased to expand our partnership with Okairos focusing on novel constructs utilizing chimpanzee adenovirus for next generation TB vaccines, as well as our collaboration with the University of Oxford, both of which are central to our organizational mission," said Dr. Tom Evans, Interim CEO of Aeras. "This effort to improve optimization and scale up under current good manufacturing practices could also potentially benefit our peers in HIV and malaria vaccine development."
Novel constructs to be pursued include Okairos' proprietary technology platform that uses potent chimpanzee adenovirus vectors to stimulate robust T-cell and antibody responses against selected antigens.

Dr Riccardo Cortese, Chief Executive Officer of Okairos, said, "This new collaboration will enable us to advance our promising technology platform. By continuing to work with Aeras and Oxford, partners with proven expertise in vaccines development, we ultimately aim to deliver novel vaccines to developing countries where there is great need."

Aeras and Oxford both bring to the collaboration considerable expertise in vaccine development and manufacturing, with

Oxford currently developing multiple vaccines, including vaccines against HIV, malaria and TB in clinical trials in the UK and Africa, and Aeras focusing primarily on tuberculosis vaccine research and development.

"Chimpanzee adenovirus-based vaccines have recently been shown to safely induce exceptionally potent cellular immunity in adults, children and infants, and are in clinical trials involving over 1,000 vaccinees in seven countries," commented Adrian Hill, Director of the Jenner Institute at Oxford University. "The diseases targeted, including malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, are the greatest infectious killers of our time so this investment in manufacturing technology is very timely."