

## Oral cholera vaccine shows promise in clinical trials

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**Singapore:** An oral cholera vaccine, Shanchol, developed by Shantha Biotechnics and recommended by WHO has shown promise in first real-life clinical trials by reducing severe cases of cholera by nearly 40 percent in a trial in Bangladeshi slums. The positive clinical trials suggest that the shot could be used routinely to help endemic countries control the life-threatening disease.

Researchers said that the vaccine was found to be safe, easy to administer and relatively inexpensive, at \$1.85 per dose. Mr Firdausi Qadri of the International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research in Dhaka, Bangladesh, said the results of this trial, published in *The Lancet* medical journal, showed how a routine oral cholera vaccination program "could substantially reduce the burden of disease and greatly contribute to cholera control efforts".

The study involved almost 27,000 residents aged 1 year and older from the urban slums of Mirpur in Dhaka, who were at high risk of cholera infection due to overcrowding and poor sanitation. The results showed vaccination with two doses of Shanchol reduced the overall incidence of severely dehydrating cholera by 37 percent after two years in the vaccine-only group and by 45 percent in combination with the hand washing and clean drinking water program.

worldwide, more than one billion people are thought to be at risk of cholera in more than 50 countries where it is endemic. The disease causes acute, watery diarrhea and spreads from person to person through water or food contaminated with *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria. The infection can kill within hours and people with weaker immune systems such as children or people with

HIV.