

Merck to Work With NewLink on Experimental Ebola Vaccine

By David Risser - Nov 24, 2014

[Merck & Co. \(MRK\)](#) and [NewLink Genetics Corp. \(NLNK\)](#) agreed to work together to develop and manufacture an experimental Ebola vaccine that is scheduled for late-stage testing early next year.

Merck, based in Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, will pay NewLink \$50 million, plus royalties, for exclusive rights to the rVSV-EBOV vaccine candidate, as well as any follow-on products, the companies said today in a filing.

Merck has the production capacity critical for large-scale manufacturing of the vaccine, which can be produced using cells from African green monkeys. Ames, Iowa-based NewLink has said it could produce 12 million doses by April, and would need help to increase manufacturing, keep the drug at a stable temperature and package it into vials.

Pending results of Phase 1 clinical trials, a Phase 3 study will be started in early 2015, the companies said.

Bloomberg reported last week that the two companies were in talks to work together on the vaccine.

NewLink licensed the drug in 2010 from the Canadian government, where it was developed. The shot contains a single gene of the Ebola virus that has been inserted into another pathogen, called vesicular stomatitis virus, which commonly causes mouth ulcers in cattle, horses and pigs. The vaccine prompts the body to generate antibodies against Ebola, but can't cause the disease.

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