Phase 3 trial investigates one-dose PrEP for women and adolescent girls

A pivotal Phase 3 study to combat HIV in women and adolescent girls is investigating the benefits and safety of a monthly oral dose of the pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) medication, islatravir. If successful, the Phase 3 study can support approval of the medicine by regulatory bodies.

Known as Impower 22, the study is a collaboration between Merck (MSD) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), and will focus on women and adolescent girls at high risk of acquiring HIV-1 in sub-Saharan Africa and is due to begin in early 2021. MSD believes that local data generation is critical to ensuring that medical solutions and treatments suit the local disease epidemiology. South Africa has the second largest allocation of clinical trials being conducted by MSD outside of the United States.

“Through these trials, we continue to build on our commitment to HIV patients. We recently announced voluntary licensing agreements to make expand access to our innovative HIV treatment doravirine in resource-limited settings and we are now pursuing the objective of making prevention (PrEP) more accessible through once a month dosing. We remain deeply driven to make a positive impact for people living with HIV and are committed to helping create the future of HIV prevention and care," says Dr Priya Agrawal, managing director for MSD South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa.

“The world will not be able to end the HIV epidemic until we can effectively prevent HIV acquisition in at-risk individuals and populations. This collaboration will help advance HIV science and potentially offer a new option to prevent HIV acquisition among at-risk women, both in sub-Saharan Africa and globally," said Dr Emilio Emini, director of the TB & HIV programme, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.