



Partners for Rabies Prevention Meeting

Wolfsberg, Switzerland, July 2013

Meeting Summary

The sixth annual meeting of the Partners for Rabies Prevention was held in Wolfsberg, Switzerland from July 15-18th 2013, kindly hosted by the UBS Optimus Foundation. The PRP group is a neutral platform where all participants are encouraged to contribute their expertise and freely express their opinion, with the Global Alliance for Rabies Control serving as the secretariat. The meeting was attended by 41 participants from 19 different countries with rabies and public health expertise within academic institutions, international health organizations, industry, government and non-governmental organizations.

The diverse group came together to review progress in international efforts by the PRP, and others, to advance the cause of rabies control at a global level. One of the main focuses was to assess successes and challenges in the areas of rabies control discussed and to find the most effective ways forwards, from local to global levels. General consensus revealed that political commitment, long term funding strategies, intersectoral and regional collaboration and local champions are key to success.

A presentation on behalf of PAHO demonstrated the immense success that has been achieved over the last 30 years in controlling canine rabies across Latin America. Intersectoral collaboration at the highest levels in each country together with a coordinated approach across the whole continent has been the key to this success, and stands as an example to other regions of the world struggling with rabies control. However, it was recognized by the group that support in the final, often hardest, steps to elimination of canine rabies will be needed. Success in other regions of the world will depend on the global community not allowing this opportunity to demonstrate canine rabies elimination to slip away.

Updates on recent PRP projects to reassess the burden of rabies and a survey of notifiability of human rabies were presented. The importance of appropriate surveillance in accurately assessing the impact of rabies, and designing and assessing the effectiveness of control efforts was highlighted.

Increasing the range of resources and tools provided to the community on rabies control, more work will be carried out to finalize a stepwise approach to reducing human death caused by canine rabies. Such a tool would help countries assess their situation regarding canine rabies control and help guide progress forwards in a series of defined, gradual steps. It would help all rabies endemic countries, from those with no knowledge of their rabies situation to those nearing elimination, to build national control strategies and efforts towards sustainable elimination of canine rabies. It will be complementary to the practical advice contained in the Canine Rabies Blueprint. An additional component of the Blueprint for Rabies Control on bat rabies will be developed.

A welcome contribution came jointly from FAO, OIE and WHO who each reinforced their organizations' commitment to global rabies control, and their willingness to work together under their Tripartite Agreement. The three sister organizations, together with GARC will prepare a short policy briefing paper designed for national government ministers, reiterating this support and uniting messages around rabies control, for World Rabies Day on September 28th. The recent establishment of an OIE canine rabies vaccine bank for Asia was recognized as an important step towards making quality vaccines accessible to countries in need.

It was concluded during the meeting that the growing body of evidence supporting rabies elimination does not necessarily translate into policy changes. Therefore, the PRP decided to create a policy action subgroup which will work to gather the evidence and build the collaborations to effect policy change in rabies control.