

PRIORITIES

Immediate priorities for FY 1994 and FY 1995 have been established for pursuit of the plan's goals. These priorities reflect the fact that improved protection against infectious diseases can rapidly be achieved by better use of existing vaccines in immunization programs and that improving on protection possible with currently licensed vaccines will require the development of improved and new vaccines.

Immunization

The U.S. measles epidemics of 1989-91, with over 55,000 cases and 136 deaths, have shown that many of the Nation's children are at risk of preventable diseases because they are not vaccinated on the proper schedule during the critical first two years of life. Hence, the President has proposed and Congress has appropriated funds for a Childhood Immunization Initiative (CII). The aim of the CII is to eliminate childhood cases of six vaccine-preventable diseases, namely, diphtheria, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b meningitis, measles, poliomyelitis, rubella (German measles), and tetanus, and to significantly reduce the occurrence of three other diseases, namely, pertussis (whooping cough), hepatitis B, and mumps, by 1996. This aim will be accomplished by increasing vaccination coverage levels to at least 90 percent among 2-year-old children by 1996 for each of the vaccinations routinely recommended, and by establishing a vaccination delivery system that maintains and further improves high coverage levels. CII activities under goals 3 and 4 of the National Vaccine Plan will focus on

- Improving the infrastructure for providing vaccines;
- Increasing community participation and parent/provider education;
- Reducing vaccine cost for parents;
- Improving the monitoring of vaccination coverage and disease; and
- Improving vaccines and vaccination schedules.

The activities of the CII lay the groundwork for a general enhancement of immunization; during FY 1994 and FY 1995, the NVPO with other agencies will identify steps that Federal agencies can take to implement the National Vaccine Advisory Committee report on "Adult Immunization."

Vaccine Development

Priorities in the development of new or improved vaccines for general use include focusing on HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, influenza (improved), malaria, pneumococcal disease (in young children), pertussis (improved), rotavirus and shigella diarrheas, streptococcal disease (group B), and tuberculosis. The plan also places emphasis on combination vaccines that can simplify vaccination delivery; such improvements to make delivery easier are included in the CII. Priority also will be given to selected activities directed toward understanding pathogens and immunity, strengthening vaccine testing and assessment capabilities, and evaluating and improving vaccine safety.

Policy Development

The NVPO in collaboration with National Vaccine Program participating agencies will address cross-cutting policy issues relevant to disease prevention. These include public/private sector collaboration in vaccine development, including the priorities of the global Children's Vaccine Initiative; Federal technology transfer for vaccine development and other issues where interagency coordination in policy development is desirable, such as in the introduction of new vaccines.