

6 VACCINE-PREVENTABLE DISEASES

a The switch from trivalent to bivalent oral polio vaccine in South Africa

Following the official declaration in September 2015 (see link below) by the World Health Organization (WHO) that wild poliovirus type 2 was globally eradicated, a plan was designed to remove the type 2 strain from the trivalent oral polio vaccine (tOPV). This was a synchronised event in all countries around the world and April 2016 was chosen as the month for the switch from tOPV (containing all 3 types of poliovirus) to bivalent OPV (only containing poliovirus types 1 and 3). Immunity to poliovirus type 2 will be maintained by administration of the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), which contains inactive virus particles of all 3 poliovirus types, in the national immunisation programs.

South Africa chose the 20th of April to conduct the switch from tOPV to bOPV. Clearly marked boxes were used for distribution of bOPV throughout the national territory during the weeks prior to the switch date. All provinces and districts were requested to plan their order of tOPV accordingly such that on the 19th of April 2016 there was just enough tOPV for routine vaccination activities. Administration of bOPV commenced on the 20th of April 2016 while all remaining tOPV was removed from the health facilities and vaccine supply chain for destruction. After the switch, the Department of Health, supported by the National Certification Committee, the National Polio Expert Committee, and the National Task Force for Polio Containment, monitored all national, provincial and district storage and distribution points, as well as a select

number of health facilities to ensure that tOPV was out of the cold chain and no longer in use, and that only bOPV was in use.

The South African vaccine switch occurred smoothly, with only a small number of districts in which tOPV was found requiring a more intense audit. National, provincial and district distribution points were all compliant, meaning tOPV stocks are no longer available and bOPV is in full use country-wide. As of the 9th of May 2016, 154 of the 155 countries using OPV around the world have switched from tOPV to bOPV.

Congratulations are in order for South African health care workers!

<http://www.polioeradication.org/mediaroom/newsstories/Global-eradication-of-wild-poliovirus-type-2-declared/tabid/526/news/1289/Default.aspx>

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Source: Centre for Vaccines and Immunology, NICD-NHLS.

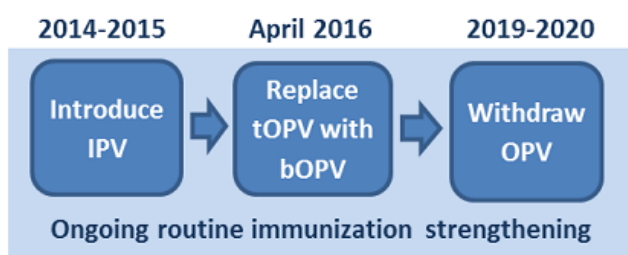


Figure 4. Key dates in the polio end-game. Taken from http://www.who.int/immunization/diseases/poliomyelitis/endgame_objective2/oral_polio_vaccine/planning/en/