Vector Control Advisory Group

MEETING REPORT
19–21 April 2021

Fourteenth meeting of the WHO Vector Control Advisory Group

World Health Organization

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1. BACKGROUND

The Vector Control Advisory Group (VCAG) of the World Health Organization (WHO) serves as an advisory body to WHO on new interventions for the control of vector-borne diseases, including tools, technologies and approaches. VCAG is jointly coordinated by the WHO Global Malaria Programme, the WHO Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases and the WHO Prequalification Team for Vector Control Products. Its specific functions are:

- to provide guidance to product developers, innovators and researchers on the generation of epidemiological data and study designs to enable assessment of the public health value of new vector control interventions;
- to assess the public health value of new vector control interventions submitted to WHO; and
- to provide advice to WHO, for submission to the Malaria Policy Advisory Group and the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Neglected Tropical Diseases on the public health value of new interventions.

The 14th VCAG meeting was convened with all 15 VCAG members, as well as product developers, innovators and researchers (jointly referred to as "applicants") on 19–21 April 2021. The meeting was co-chaired by Heather Ferguson and Salim Abdulla. The agenda is reproduced in Annex 1, and the participants are listed in Annex 2.

This report details the proceedings and outcomes of the meeting, which was held virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. VCAG provided feedback and recommendations to applicants who had made submissions under the following intervention classes:

- bait stations,
- spatial repellents and
- insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) designed to kill host-seeking insecticide-resistant mosquitoes.

Two additional applicants presented updates to the VCAG committee on other intervention classes, namely:

- lethal house lures and
- reduction of pathogen transmission induced by gene drive.

Before the meeting, all VCAG members and invited experts completed declaration of interests forms for WHO experts. The declared interests and how they were managed by the WHO VCAG Secretariat are summarized in Annex 3.

2. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

VCAG members were officially welcomed by Dr Rogerio Paulo Pinto De Sá Gaspar, Director, WHO Regulation and Prequalification, the department responsible for assessing and prequalifying vector control interventions, among other activities. He noted the importance of continued efforts to evaluate new vector control interventions despite the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis. Accessibility to new and innovative vector control tools remained a priority, especially as many of those impacted by vector-borne

diseases are often the most vulnerable and come from the poorest countries. The work of VCAG, supported by the three WHO departments, is therefore essential. WHO remains committed to encouraging the development and accessibility of innovative and effective new tools for the populations at risk.

3. OPEN SESSION

3.1. Introduction to the WHO guideline development process

Dr Elie Akl, American University of Beirut, described the processes involved in developing WHO guidelines and the data requirements that underpin the recommendations contained therein. Dr Akl, a seasoned guideline methodologist, has been closely involved in preparing numerous WHO guidelines, including the consolidation of the malaria vector control guidelines with those of other technical areas in malaria. His presentation gave a high-level overview of the process and introduced the characteristics of the data required to inform WHO recommendations. Importantly, WHO guidelines are developed in response to the needs of decision-makers in Member States. The presentation is available on the VCAG webpage *(1)*.

3.2. Guidelines for malaria vector control: development, updates and use of MAGICapp

Dr Jenny Stevenson, WHO Global Malaria Programme, presented the consolidated malaria guidelines published by WHO in February 2021, which merge the previously published WHO guidelines on malaria case management and malaria vector control into a single platform. They include recommendations and good practice statements, with associated evidence profiles, justifications, background information and references. The consolidated guidelines are hosted on the WHO website *(2)* and on MAGICapp *(3)* in a format that is easy to search and download specific topics. The website's structure was demonstrated to show examples of recommendations for vector control and how to access the results of underlying systematic reviews that underpin recommendations. The guidelines section on malaria vector control will evolve further in 2021–2022 to incorporate information from ongoing systematic reviews. The presentation material is available on the VCAG webpage *(1)*.

4. APPLICANT SUBMISSIONS

4.1. Intervention class: bait station

Bait stations are defined as interventions that are designed to attract and kill target