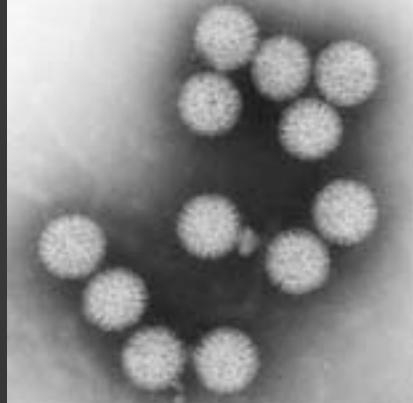


Rotavirus kills nearly 500,000 children a year.



PATH, Siri Wood

A vaccine means hope.



PATH



Richard Lord



**ROTAVIRUS**  
**VACCINE PROGRAM**  

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**A PATH AFFILIATE**

# The global health community is moving quickly to bring a rotavirus vaccine to the children who need it most.

## Rotavirus—deadly dehydration

Parents in the developing world fear childhood diarrhea; the dehydration it causes is one of the biggest killers of young children and infants. One of the major diarrheal diseases is rotavirus, which kills an estimated 500,000 children each year.<sup>1</sup> Rotavirus also triggers vomiting and fever, and leads to rapid dehydration and often death.

Throughout the world, nearly every child is infected with rotavirus before the age of three. Even in countries with effective sanitation and health care systems, children are susceptible to rotavirus. In the United States, for example, 50,000 children a year are hospitalized with dehydration caused by rotavirus. However, over 80 percent of rotavirus deaths occur in developing countries, where prompt medical care is often out of reach.<sup>1</sup>

## Standard diarrhea treatments do not work effectively against rotavirus

For children with severe rotavirus, treatment options are very limited. Oral rehydration solution (ORS) is a common intervention for managing diarrhea and is usually effective in treating mild rotavirus infections.

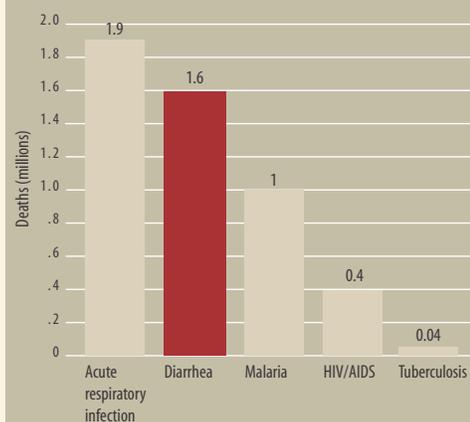
However, children infected with rotavirus very often have persistent vomiting, which causes parents to stop administering ORS when the dehydration worsens.<sup>2</sup> In such cases, urgent medical care is needed but often not accessible.

## The only effective solution is a rotavirus vaccine

A vaccine against rotavirus represents the most promising method for preventing the disease. In three to five years, at least one vaccine is likely to be available for use in the world's poorest countries. The challenge is to make sure the vaccine gets to those who need it most.

The Rotavirus Vaccine Program (RVP) was established to speed up the time it takes to get a vaccine to children in developing countries—typically 10 to 15 years. RVP intends to reduce this time to less than five years.

## Leading causes of death from infectious diseases for children under 5 years old



Source: WHO, 2002.





PATH, Florence Camus-Bablion

An estimated **one-third of all diarrheal deaths** in children under five years old **are due to rotavirus.**

## Accelerating access to rotavirus vaccines

RVP, along with its strategic partners, the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is testing and developing a new model for accelerated vaccine introduction. By demonstrating to governments the impact of the disease and the promise of a vaccine, RVP will help to ensure demand for vaccines. At the same time, RVP is working with manufacturers to establish a consistent supply of rotavirus vaccine to meet that demand.

RVP will test and develop this model in several developing countries and help ensure eventual worldwide access to rotavirus vaccine, saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of children.

### References

- 1 Parashar UD, Hummelman EG, Bresee JS, Miller MA, Glass RI. Global illness and deaths caused by rotavirus disease in children. *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 2003; 9(5):565–572.
- 2 Ahmed FU. Children at risk of developing dehydration from diarrhea: A case-control study. *Journal of Tropical Pediatrics* 2002; 48:259–263.



Richard Lord

## The Rotavirus Vaccine Program

The Rotavirus Vaccine Program was established in 2003 at PATH, an international, nonprofit organization that creates sustainable, culturally relevant solutions, enabling communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health. RVP works in partnership with the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its mission is to reduce child morbidity and mortality from diarrheal disease by accelerating the availability of rotavirus vaccines appropriate for use in developing countries. The work of the Rotavirus Vaccine Program is performed under a collaborative arrangement with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization. RVP has received an initial \$30 million in financial support from The Vaccine Fund.



[www.rotavirusvaccine.org](http://www.rotavirusvaccine.org)



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