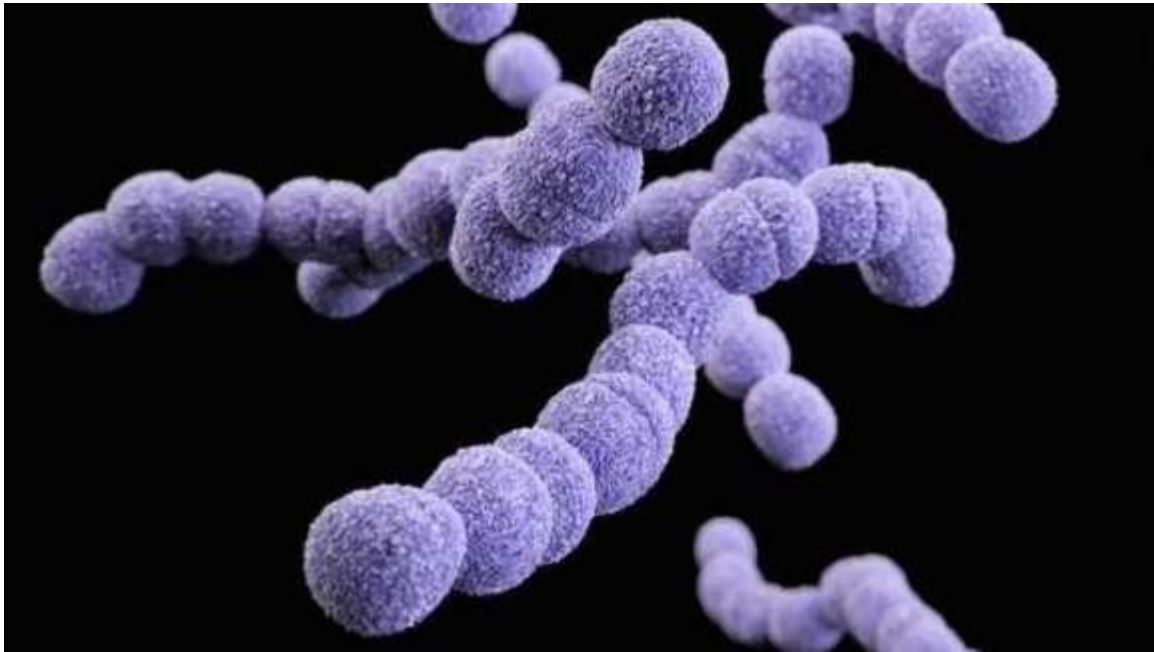


Biovac and PATH announce partnership to develop novel vaccine against newborn infection



South Africa, 2 May 2017—The South Africa–based Biovac Institute (Biovac) and PATH, an international health organization, are pleased to announce the launch of a collaborative partnership to develop a novel vaccine against Group B Streptococcus (GBS), supported by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

GBS is a leading cause of severe infection in newborns and young infants in many countries, including South Africa. In fact, the estimated incidence of invasive GBS disease in South Africa is among the highest, with 2.38 cases per 1,000 live births. Whilst people of all ages can contract the GBS bacterial infection, newborns are more susceptible and vulnerable to this potentially deadly infection—particularly as an estimated 1 in 4 pregnant women carries the GBS bacterium, which can be passed to babies during birth. In parts of the developing world, mortality rates can reach as high as 38 percent. Babies who survive the disease are often left with lifelong disabilities such as deafness, blindness, and developmental delays. GBS may also play a role in miscarriage and stillbirth.

Preventative antibiotic treatment given to mothers before birth can successfully prevent early-onset GBS in newborns, but this option is not available in most resource-limited countries—and it doesn't always protect against late-onset GBS, which can occur in the weeks or months following birth without any clear cause.

A vaccine against GBS would be revolutionary in that it would be given to pregnant mothers who would pass on the protective antibodies to their babies, ensuring protection at birth and during the first critical months of life (when late-onset GBS disease is a risk).

More information at <http://www.path.org/news/press-room/812/>