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HHS News

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



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BARDA awards contract to develop Prussian blue for pediatric use Contract supports advanced development of Prussian blue for infants ages newborn to two years

March 9, 2011: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority has awarded a contract to Heyltx Corp., Katy, Texas, for advanced development of a safe and effective way to administer Prussian Blue to infants ages newborn to two years old who may have ingested radioactive material as a result of a dirty bomb or nuclear fallout.

Awarded Feb. 25, the one-year contract is for \$3 million and can be extended up to three additional years for a total of up to \$15.1 million. Under the contract the company will develop a way to use the current formula of Radiogardase (Prussian blue) for this pediatric population.

Prussian blue can help remove a radioactive material called radioactive cesium (Cs-137) from people's bodies that may have entered due to eating or drinking contaminated food or water sources, inhalation or through open wounds. The sooner these materials are removed from the body, the lower the risk of negative health effects from the contamination will be. Doctors can prescribe Prussian blue if they determine that a patient could benefit from this treatment.

Currently the Strategic National Stockpile includes Prussian blue, which is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for treating individuals two years and older. The new contract supports studies that potentially could lead to a change in the package insert for safe and effective use of the current formulation of the drug in infants from newborn to two years of age.

The contract uses the federal government's new approach to producing medical countermeasures – the medications, vaccines, medical equipment and supplies needed for a health emergency. On Aug. 19, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius released an examination of the federal government's system to produce medical countermeasures, along with recommendations for a better approach. The recommendations included developing more countermeasures that are safe and effective for children, the elderly, and other vulnerable populations.

The contract is part of BARDA's comprehensive, integrated, portfolio approach to the advanced research and development, innovation, acquisition, and manufacturing infrastructure for vaccines, drugs, therapeutics, diagnostic tools, and non-pharmaceutical products for public health emergency threats. These threats include chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats, pandemic influenza, and emerging infectious diseases. For more information, visit www.phe.gov.

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