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## Meningitis: At 50 Cents a Dose, a Vaccine Has Success Among West Africans

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A new meningococcal vaccine, just introduced in West Africa, has produced very encouraging results, according to the public-private partnership coordinating its distribution.

This year's [meningitis](#) season is almost over, and there have been only four confirmed cases of meningitis A in Burkina Faso, the first country to offer the shot to all citizens under 30 (above, a child was vaccinated there). Three infections were in people from Togo, where the vaccine is not used; they had crossed the border for care. The fourth was in a Burkinan who was not vaccinated.

In Mali and Niger, the vaccine was distributed in phased rollouts starting in the most vulnerable areas. No cases were detected in Mali and only four in Niger, all in unvaccinated individuals.

The [results](#) were released last week in the journal [Health Affairs](#) by the Meningitis Vaccine Project, a partnership of the World Health Organization and PATH, a nonprofit research group in Seattle. It is financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

“The huge expectations that we had for this vaccine are now being fulfilled,” said Adama Traoré, Burkina Faso’s health minister.

Over the last two decades, more than a million cases have been reported across Africa’s “meningitis belt” on the Sahara’s southern edge. If money is found to roll out the vaccine in that region, some experts believe that it could save 150,000 lives by 2015.

The vaccine, called MenAfriVac, costs only 50 cents a dose. It is made in India with technology donated by the United States government for token royalties. There is no market for it in rich countries, so it is supported entirely by donors.