

Mesa Group Formed for Better Understanding of Human Immune System

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UC San Diego, the J. Craig Venter Institute, the La Jolla Institute for Allergy and Immunology and [The Scripps Research Institute](#) have formed a partnership to improve understanding of the human immune system, it was announced Thursday.

The Mesa Consortium, a scientific hub for the Human Vaccines Project, will also seek to expedite development of vaccines and biological methods to prevent and treat global diseases.

“Vaccines have helped us eradicate smallpox and nearly eradicate polio, but we have not yet experienced the same vaccine successes for global killers like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, cancer and other diseases,” said Wayne Koff, president and CEO of the Human Vaccines Project. “We need new approaches to address major gaps in knowledge, leverage recent technological advances and hasten vaccine development.”

He said the Mesa Consortium brings “an unparalleled and complementary set of scientific capabilities in the areas of immunology, vaccines and immunotherapeutic research” to the network.

“We look forward to major contributions toward deciphering the key principles of human immunity and ushering in a new era of global disease prevention and control,” Koff said.

The Human Vaccines Project is a global initiative that brings together research centers and pharmaceutical companies to decode the human immune system and accelerate the development of vaccines and immunotherapies against major infectious diseases and cancers.

The Mesa Consortium will carry out immunological analyses from the project's clinical research studies, which are designed to answer specific questions about human immunity. The Mesa Consortium will also serve as the project's bioinformatics hub.

“Driven by partnerships with leading academic centers, and enabled by new technologies and a scientific plan focused on solving the main barriers to developing new immune-based interventions, we believe our collaboration with the project could help to transform global efforts in vaccine and immunotherapeutic development,” said UCSD Chancellor Pradeep Khosla.

Genomics pioneer J. Craig Venter, founder, chairman and CEO of the institute that bears his name, said new genetic and immune monitoring technologies are enabling an unprecedented look at the human immune system, and are generating extensive amounts of data.

Combined with sophisticated bioinformatics analyses, scientists may soon be able to learn how to stimulate and direct immune responses against some of the world's most pressing diseases, he said.

—*City News Service*