

# VACCINATION AGAINST SEVERE PNEUMOCOCCAL INFECTIONS

/Healthcare – Pharmaceutical/

## SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

The primary plan of the project was to **build the public's and particularly small children parents' awareness** of existence of severe pneumococcal diseases (meningitis – brain fever, bacteraemia, pneumonia which cause severe and permanent harm to children's health that may, in some cases, result in death), and point out to a possibility of effective prevention – the Prevenar vaccine. The secondary effect of the communication was to **create the public's pressure on decision makers in order to support a discussion on general implementing of vaccination against pneumococcal infections** in the vaccination calendar in the Czech Republic.

Both target settings were met in 2007 in terms of a properly planned and executed PR communication strategy. Thanks to the wide media publicity of particular pneumococcal diseases cases and publication of heart-breaking human stories, the public's concern was successfully attracted and the awareness of an effective prevention raised. Parents' initiatives and scientific groups have initiated discussions at both professional and political level on implementing general vaccination in the official vaccination programme.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM / OPPORTUNITY:

The main obstacle of the project was **insufficient awareness on pneumococcal infections** in public, journalists' lack of interest in this topic and almost none awareness of availability of effective prevention in the form of a vaccine – Prevenar. In the first instant, it was necessary to build awareness of the disease malignance and potential fatal consequences. It was necessary to catch up the existing cases, establish co-operation between professionals (physicians in particular –

paediatricians and immunologists) and parents and promote the cases in the media.

A great opportunity was a **co-operation with naturally arisen platform** – non-for-profit organization which was founded by Mr. Kalovský and Mrs. Kalovská, the couple whose youngest child lost hearing due to pneumococcal infection. Communication was also supported by an official statement issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) who ranges general vaccination against pneumococci among the world priorities and considers pneumococcal diseases the most serious infectious disease for which effective prevention is available.

## RESEARCH:

Before starting the project a public survey on parents' opinion on non-obligatory vaccination of small children was performed by the STENMARK agency. It consisted of face-to-face interviews with pre-defined population of mothers of 5-years-old children. The survey outcome showed that the vaccine against pneumococcus remains a big mystery for parents. However, there was a positive finding in this respect – the Czech parents' interest in non-obligatory vaccination is ever increasing, including the one against pneumococci.

## PLANNING:

The communicating tactics were based on four basic pillars and communicating measures which via the tools selected covered all key target groups – parents of small children, general public, media, health professionals and decision makers (public affairs). The aims of the particular pillars were as follows:

- **WARNING:** Informing of pneumococcus as little known yet all the more malign disease.

- **EDUCATION:** Communicating the preventative effects of Prevenar-based vaccination and ways of helping the parents and children who face the consequences of serious pneumococcal infections.
- **PREVENTION:** Supporting the vaccination via precluding opinions infirming vaccination and backing up completing of the vaccination calendar in the eyes of both lay and professional public
- Giving support to argumentation against the State via discussing the collective immunity, a problem of growing resistance against antibiotics and thus the economic aspect of the vaccination against pneumococcal infections.

## ✓ EXECUTION

The communication campaign used a few basic communication tools. Selection of the most convenient tools and timing was of paramount importance with regard to the target group to be addressed.

- **Invoking and stimulating the journalists' interest**  
It was of major importance to show some severe cases of pneumococcal infections in the most viewed programmes on broadcast channels and radio stations. Thanks to high-power media relations, high-quality background materials and particularly operational and flexible co-operation with individual television and radio reporters, it was possible to publish in both most watched TV channels (TV Nova and ČT1) three serious cases of the pneumococcus-induced disease occurring in small children.
- **Communication was considerably supported by co-operation between the platforms of the affected children's parents**  
Thanks to their contribution contacts were made with other equally affected families whose concern was to disclose their negative experience and share information with others and thus prevent other potential cases. The agency used several tools to communicate directly with the parents – the principal of them being specially designed informational websites, a newsletter distributed over waiting-rooms of children surgeries and a series

of meetings with professionals and parents organized within the Mother Centres network. Discussion and a consultancy office has been established and there is an opportunity to share the own experience with other people. While communicating with decision makers professional support from the part of big medical societies to implementing the vaccination was used.

- **In the scope of public affairs the agency organized a seminar in the Czech Parliament**  
The seminar hosted, in addition to the medical public, representatives of the Czech Republic (the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic) and law-makers who will decide on implementing the vaccination in the obligatory vaccination programme in the Czech Republic. The seminar outcome was also supported by the accompanying publishing campaign in the media supported by a press conference in the Parliament premises, and a series of direct e-mails to the interested journalists.



## CAMPAIGN OUTCOMES / MONITORING AND EVALUATION

**The outcome of a several-month co-operation between the agency and clients was more than a hundred-percent increase in the sale of the Prevenar vaccine (the sales increased by incredible 1428 %).**

In the course of the communication campaign the STENMARK survey agency organized two opinion polls focused on the general public awareness on pneumococcal diseases and potential prevention against them. The first one showed that **41 %** of all polled persons were **aware of pneumococcal diseases** (CATIBUS, August 2007). The second CATIBUS wave (November 2007) showed significant increase in the awareness of pneumococci across the whole population, by almost 20 % to 60.1 % of all the polled, to be specific.

Awareness of the Prevenar vaccine extended as well. While before the start of the project only 15 % knew about it according to a STENMARK survey, the CATIBUS outcomes (November 2007) show that nearly **27 %** of the polled heard about it.

