

## **Search for Bird Flu Vaccine Continues**

Recently, a 9-month-old girl was infected by H9N2 and was being isolated in hospital. Although most of the cases were due to virus transmission from infected birds or poultries, rapid mutations of the virus could eventually develop and allow human-to-human transmission. The potential epidemic of human transmission raises a significant concern to the public.

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in US (NIAID) has co-operated with two pharmaceutical companies for the production of vaccine against avian flu since 2004. Currently, they conducted a range of concentrations of H5N1 and H9N2 vaccines to evaluate their safety and immunogenicity.

The first clinical trial of H5N1 vaccine began in 2005. Over 400 healthy adults aged 18- to 64- year old were invited to conduct the safety and efficacy of H5N1 vaccines. The results showed that two doses of 90mcg H5N1 vaccine generated the strongest immune response among those dosages tested. Another trial will be undergone among children and elderly to evaluate its safety and efficacy and the results will be announced this year. NIAID is also investigating the method to provide a stable supply of the vaccine during the outbreak of the H5N1. If the virus varied, the existing vaccines would be no longer valid and researchers need to develop a new vaccine.

Avian flu prevention requires the collaboration between the government and the public. We should be prepared for avian flu by keeping personal hygiene.