



V A C C I N E & G E N E T H E R A P Y I N S T I T U T E O F F L O R I D A

For Media:
Rebecca Rieger
Manager, Marketing & Communications
(O): (772) 345-5697
(C): (772) 418-9690
rieger@vgtifl.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Ted Ross, Ph.D. is available for interviews**

VGTI Florida Aims to Stop Spread of Chikungunya Virus with Novel Vaccine

- *No licensed vaccine exists for mosquito-borne threat that has reached U.S.*
- *Virus-like particle platform technology could also target Ebola virus*
- *Scheduled to exhibit at Military Health System Research Symposium*

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. – August 11, 2014 – It's another soaking wet rainy season in South Florida, and with it comes ideal conditions for mosquitos to breed and thrive, but this summer brings fears beyond just a pesky bite with the U.S. arrival of the debilitating mosquito-spread virus, chikungunya. Mosquitos can easily and efficiently transmit this virus to humans causing high fever, severe muscle/joint pain, headache, fatigue and rash. While there is currently no FDA-approved vaccine to prevent the spread of the chikungunya virus, the head of viral immunity research at the Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute of Florida (VGTI Florida®), a leading non-profit biomedical research institute, has developed a new platform vaccine technology that is expected to provide complete protection against chikungunya virus infection.

"We have developed a novel virus-like particle (VLP) vaccine that is a next-generation cell-culture technology, unique from traditional vaccines which are predominantly produced in chicken eggs," stated Ted Ross, Ph.D., VGTI Florida's Program Director of Vaccines & Viral Immunity. "Our VLP platform uses specific, proprietary proteins from the chikungunya virus capable of eliciting a potent, robust and enduring immune response, enabling the immune system to prevent replication of virus, and thus, prevent infection."

While chikungunya is seldom fatal, the virus can infect multiple organs including the liver, brain and muscles causing significant discomfort. Additionally, infection in the joints can result in the advent of chronic disease such as long-lasting arthritis.

VGTI Florida will get the chance to highlight the promise of its VLP platform with government officials while exhibiting at the Military Health System Research Symposium (MHSRS) in Fort Lauderdale at the Marriott Harbor Beach Resort Hotel, August 18th-20th. The MHSRS is the Department of Defense's premier scientific meeting, and VGTI Florida is currently seeking additional funding and partnering opportunities to rapidly advance Dr. Ross' VLP vaccines into human clinical studies to protect against a broad range of emerging viral threats.

"Our unique approach involves computationally optimizing certain protein targets expressed by the virus and delivering this payload via our VLP platform to better stimulate long-lasting immunity. We believe this approach can also be translated into the manufacture of many similar kinds of vaccines, targeting virtually any viral threat, including the Ebola virus," added Dr. Ross.

About VGTI Florida:

The Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute of Florida (VGTI Florida) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) biomedical research institute dedicated to understanding the roles of our immune system and our genes in disease, as well as the development of innovative treatments. We are in an expansion phase recruiting leading scientists from around the globe to join VGTI Florida where they can work side-by-side targeting infectious disease, cancer, and the impact of an aging immune system. For more information, please visit www.VGTIFL.org. VGTI Florida® and Translating Research into Health® are Registered Trademarks of the Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute of Florida.