(11) Application No. AU 2003242955 B2

(19) AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE

(54) Title

Protein-based streptococcus pneumoniae vaccines

(51)[6] International Patent Classification(s)

A61K 39/09 (2006.01) 20060101AFI2005100

A61K 39/09 8BMEP

PCT/IL03/00271

(21) Application No: 2003242955 (22) Application Date: 2003.04.01

(87) WIPO No: WO03/082183

(30) Priority Data

(31) Number	(32) Date	(33) Country
60/368,981	2002.04.02	US

(43) Publication Date : 2003.10.13

(43) Publication Journal Date : 2003.11.20

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(56) Related Art

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US 5728387

US 6699703

McDaniel L.S. et al., FASEB J., 1988, Vol. 2, No. 5, page A1257

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau

(43) International Publication Date
9 October 2003 (09.10.2003)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 2003/082183 A3

(51) International Patent Classification[7]: A61K 39/09, 39/00, 39/385, 39/02, C07K 1/00

(21) International Application Number: PCT/IL2003/000271

(22) International Filing Date: 1 April 2003 (01.04.2003)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
60/368,981 2 April 2002 (02.04.2002) US

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(81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HU, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:
— *with international search report*
— *before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments*

(88) Date of publication of the international search report:
15 January 2004

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

WO 2003/082183 A3

(54) Title: PROTEIN-BASED *STREPTOCOCCUS PNEUMONIAE* VACCINES

(57) Abstract: The present invention is primarily directed to a method for preventing infection of a mammalian subject with *S. pneumoniae*, wherein said method comprises administering to said subject an effective amount of one or more *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins, wherein said proteins are selected from a defined group of immunogenic proteins. The present invention further provides vaccine compositions containing said cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins.

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PROTEIN-BASED *STREPTOCOCCUS PNEUMONIAE* VACCINES

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a method for vaccinating subjects against infection with *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. More specifically, the present invention provides a vaccination method based on the use of immunogenic *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and cell membrane proteins, as well as vaccine compositions comprising said proteins.

Background of the Invention

Mere reference to background art herein should not be construed as an admission that such art constitutes common general knowledge in relation to the invention.

The Gram-positive bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae* is a major cause of disease, suffering and death worldwide. Diseases caused by infection with this agent include otitis media, pneumonia, bacteremia, meningitis and sepsis. In some cases, infected individuals may become asymptomatic carriers of *S. pneumoniae*, thereby readily allowing the rapid spread of this infective agent throughout the population. In view of the serious consequences of infection with *S. pneumoniae*, as well as its rapid spread within and between populations, there is an urgent need for safe, effective vaccination regimes.

Current methods of vaccination are based on inoculation of the subject with polysaccharides obtained from the capsules of *S. pneumoniae*. While these polysaccharide-based vaccine preparations have been found to be reasonably efficacious when used to prevent infection in adult populations, they are significantly less useful in the treatment of young children (under two years of age) and the elderly. One

commonly-used capsular polysaccharide 23-valent vaccine, for example, has been found to be only 60% effective in preventing *S. pneumoniae* invasive disease in elderly subjects and completely incapable of yielding clinically-useful antibody responses in the under-two age group [Shapiro E.D. *et al.* (1991) N. Engl. J. Med. 325: 1453-1460].

In an attempt to increase the immunogenicity of these vaccines, various compositions comprising capsular polysaccharides that have been conjugated with various carrier or adjuvant proteins have been used. Although vaccines of this type constitute an improvement in relation to the unconjugated polysaccharide vaccines, they have not overcome the problem of coverage, since they are effective against only about 10 % of the 92 known capsular serotypes. Consequently, upon vaccination, repopulation with serotypes not present in the vaccine occurs.

In the cases of certain other bacteria of pathogenic importance for human and other mammalian species, vaccines comprising immunogenic virulence proteins are currently being developed. Such protein-based vaccines should be of particular value in the case of vulnerable subjects such as very young children, in view of the fact that such subjects are able to produce antibodies against foreign proteins. Unfortunately, very little is known of the molecular details of the life cycle of *S. pneumoniae*, or of the nature of role of the various virulence factors which are known or thought to be involved in targeting and infection of susceptible hosts.

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It is a purpose of the present invention to provide a method for protecting individuals against infection with *S. pneumoniae* by the use of a protein-based vaccine.

It is another purpose of the invention to provide a protein-based vaccine that is prepared from the immunogenic cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins of *S. pneumoniae*.

Embodiments of the present invention provide a vaccination method that overcomes one or more of the problems or drawbacks of prior art methods.

Further objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent as the description proceeds.

Summary of the Invention

It has now been found that it is possible to protect individuals against infection with *S. pneumoniae* by means of administering to said individuals a vaccine composition comprising one or more proteins isolated from the outer layers of the aforementioned bacteria. Unexpectedly, it was found that such vaccine compositions are effective against a wide range of different *S. pneumoniae* serotypes, and in all age groups, including those age groups which do not produce anti-*S. pneumoniae* antibodies following inoculation with polysaccharide-based vaccines.

The present invention is primarily directed to a method for preventing infection of mammalian subjects with *S. pneumoniae*, wherein said method comprises administering to a

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subject in need of such treatment an effective amount of one or more isolated *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins, wherein said proteins are associated with an age-related immune response and are selected from the group consisting of:

phosphoenolpyruvate protein phosphotransferase, phospho-mannomutase, trigger factor, elongation factor G, tetracycline resistance protein (tetO), DNA directed RNA polymerase alpha-chain, NADH oxidase, glutamyl-tRNA amidotransferase subunit A, N utilization substance protein A homolog, XAA-HIS dipeptidase, cell division protein ftsz, zinc metalloproteinase in SCAA 5'region (ORF 6), L-lactate dehydrogenase, glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH), fructose-biphosphate aldolase, UDP-glucose 4-epimerase, GTP binding protein typA/BipA, GMP synthase, glutamyl-tRNA synthetase, NADP-specific glutamate dehydrogenase, Elongation factor TS, phosphoglycerate kinase (cell wall protein), pyridine nucleotide-disulfide oxido-reductase, 40S ribosomal protein S1, 6-phosphogluconate dehydrogenase, aminopeptidase C, carbomyl-phosphate synthase (large subunit), PTS system mannose-specific IIAB components, ribosomal protein S2, dihydroorotate dehydrogenase, aspartate carbamoyltransferase, elongation factor Tu, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein A (PsipA), phosphogycerate kinase (cell membrane protein), ABC transporter substrate-binding protein, endopeptidase O, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein B (PsipB) and Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein C (PsipC).

The means used to identify the aforementioned *S. pneumoniae* proteins, and their unique public access database accession codes will be disclosed and described hereinbelow.

In a preferred embodiment of the method of the present invention, one or more adjuvants may be optionally administered to the subject together with one or more of the aforementioned *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins.

In one particularly preferred embodiment, the method of the present invention for preventing infection of mammalian subjects by *S. pneumoniae* comprises administering to a subject in need of such treatment an effective amount of *S. pneumoniae* glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH).

In another particularly preferred embodiment, the method of the present invention for preventing infection of mammalian subjects by *S. pneumoniae* comprises administering to a subject in need of such treatment an effective amount of *S. pneumoniae* fructose-biphosphate aldolase.

In one preferred embodiment of the method of the invention, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are *S. pneumoniae* proteins that are associated with an age-related immune response.

The term "age-related immune response" (as used throughout this application) indicates that the ability of subjects to produce antibodies to the protein or proteins causing said immune response increases with age. In the case of human subjects, said ability is measured over a time scale beginning with neonates and ending at approximately age four years and adults. In non-human mammalian subjects, the

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"age-related immune response" is measured over an age range extending from neonates to an age at which the immune system of the young mammal is at a stage of development comparable to that of a pre-puberty human child and adults.

In another preferred embodiment of the method of the invention, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are lectins.

In another preferred embodiment of the method of the invention, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are non-lectins.

In another preferred embodiment of the method of the invention, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are a mixture of lectins and non-lectins.

The term "lectins" is used hereinabove and hereinbelow to indicate proteins having the ability to specifically bind to polysaccharides or oligosaccharides. Conversely, the term "non-lectins" is used to refer to proteins lacking the aforementioned saccharide-binding property.

In one preferred embodiment of the method of the invention, the mammalian subject is a human subject.

In another aspect, the present invention is directed to a vaccine composition comprising as the active ingredient one or more isolated cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins isolated from *S. pneumoniae*, wherein said proteins are associated with an age-related immune response and are selected from the group consisting of:

phosphoenolpyruvate protein phosphotransferase, phospho-mannomutase, trigger factor, elongation factor G, tetracycline resistance protein (tetO), DNA directed RNA polymerase alpha-chain, NADH oxidase, glutamyl-tRNA amidotransferase subunit A, N utilization substance protein A homolog, XAA-HIS dipeptidase, cell division protein ftsz, zinc metalloproteinase in SCAA 5' region (ORF 6), L-lactate dehydrogenase, glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH), fructose-biphosphate aldolase, UDP-glucose 4-epimerase, GTP binding protein typA/BipA, GMP synthase, glutamyl-tRNA synthetase, NADP-specific glutamate dehydrogenase, Elongation factor TS, phosphoglycerate kinase (cell wall protein), pyridine nucleotide-disulfide oxido-reductase, 40S ribosomal protein S1, 6-phosphogluconate dehydrogenase, aminopeptidase C, carbomyl-phosphate synthase (large subunit), PTS system mannose-specific IIAB components, ribosomal protein S2, dihydroorotate dehydrogenase, aspartate carbamoyltransferase, elongation factor Tu, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein A (PsipA), phosphogycerate kinase (cell membrane protein), ABC transporter substrate-binding protein and endopeptidase O, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein B (PsipB) and Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein C (PsipC).

The vaccine compositions of the present invention may also contain other, non-immunologically-specific additives, diluents and excipients. For example, in many cases, the vaccine compositions of the present invention may contain - in addition to the *S. pneumoniae* cell-wall and/or cell-membrane protein(s) - one or more adjuvants.

In one particularly preferred embodiment, the vaccine composition of the present invention comprises an effective amount of *S. pneumoniae* glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) as the active ingredient.

In another particularly preferred embodiment of the present invention, the vaccine composition comprises an effective amount of *S. pneumoniae* fructose-biphosphate aldolase as the active ingredient.

The aforementioned vaccine compositions may clearly be used for preventing infection of the mammalian subjects inoculated therewith by *S. pneumoniae*. However, said vaccine composition is not restricted to this use alone. Rather it may be usefully employed to prevent infection by any infectious agent whose viability or proliferation may be inhibited by the antibodies generated by a host in response to the inoculation therein of the one or more *S. pneumoniae* proteins provided in said composition.

In one preferred embodiment of the vaccine composition of the present invention, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are *S. pneumoniae* proteins that are associated with an age-related immune response.

In another preferred embodiment of the vaccine composition of the present invention, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are lectins.

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In another preferred embodiment of the vaccine composition of the present invention, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are non-lectins.

In a further preferred embodiment of the vaccine composition of the present invention, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are a mixture of lectins and non-lectins.

The present invention also encompasses the use of one or more isolated *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins in the preparation of a vaccine for use in the prevention of diseases and carrier states caused by said *S pneumoniae*, wherein said proteins are associated with an age-related immune response and are selected from the group consisting of:

phosphoenolpyruvate protein phosphotransferase, phospho-mannomutase, trigger factor, elongation factor G, tetracycline resistance protein (tetO), DNA directed RNA polymerase alpha-chain, NADH oxidase, glutamyl-tRNA amidotransferase subunit A, N utilization substance protein A homolog, XAA-HIS dipeptidase, cell division protein ftsz, zinc metalloproteinase in SCAA 5'region (ORF 6), L-lactate dehydrogenase, glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH), fructose-biphosphate aldolase, UDP-glucose 4-epimerase, GTP binding protein typA/BipA, GMP synthase, glutamyl-tRNA synthetase, NADP-specific glutamate dehydrogenase, Elongation factor TS, phosphoglycerate kinase (cell wall protein), pyridine nucleotide-disulfide oxido-reductase, 40S ribosomal protein S1, 6-phosphogluconate dehydrogenase, aminopeptidase C, carbomyl-phosphate synthase (large subunit), PTS system mannose-specific IIAB components, ribosomal protein S2, dihydroorotate

dehydrogenase, aspartate carbamoyltransferase, elongation factor Tu, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein A (PsipA), phosphogycerate kinase (cell membrane protein), ABC transporter substrate-binding protein endopeptidase O, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein B (PsipB) and Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein C (PsipC).

In one particularly preferred embodiment, the protein used in the preparation of the vaccine is *S. pneumoniae* glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH).

In another particularly preferred embodiment of the present invention, the protein used in the preparation of the vaccine is *S. pneumoniae* fructose-biphosphate aldolase.

Preferably, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins used in the preparation of said vaccine are *S. pneumoniae* proteins that are associated with an age-related immune response.

In another preferred embodiment, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins used in the preparation of the abovementioned vaccine are lectins.

In yet another preferred embodiment the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins used in the preparation of the abovementioned vaccine are non-lectins.

In a further preferred embodiment, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins used in the preparation of the

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abovementioned vaccine are a mixture of lectins and non-lectins.

The present invention is also directed to one or more isolated *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins for use as a vaccine for the prevention of diseases and carrier states caused by said *S. pneumoniae*, wherein said proteins are selected from the group consisting of: phosphoenolpyruvate protein phosphotransferase, phospho-mannomutase, trigger factor, elongation factor G, tetracycline resistance protein (tetO), DNA directed RNA polymerase alpha-chain, NADH oxidase, glutamyl-tRNA amidotransferase subunit A, N utilization substance protein A homolog, XAA-HIS dipeptidase, cell division protein ftsz, zinc metalloproteinase in SCAA 5'region (ORF 6), L-lactate dehydrogenase, glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH); fructose-biphosphate aldolase, UDP-glucose 4-epimerase, GTP binding protein typA/BipA, GMP synthase, glutamyl-tRNA synthetase, NADP-specific glutamate dehydrogenase, Elongation factor TS, phosphoglycerate kinase (cell wall protein), pyridine nuclectide-disulfide oxido-reductase, 40S ribosomal protein S1, 6-phosphogluconate dehydrogenase, aminopeptidase C, carbomyl-phosphate synthase (large subunit), PTS system mannose-specific IIAB components, ribosomal protein S2, dihydroorotate dehydrogenase, aspartate carbamoyltransferase, elongation factor Tu, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein A (PsipA), phosphogycerate kinase (cell membrane protein), ABC transporter substrate-binding protein, endopeptidase O, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein B (PsipB) and Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein C (PsipC).

In one particularly preferred embodiment, the protein for use as said vaccine is *S. pneumoniae* glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH).

In another particularly preferred embodiment of the present invention, the protein for use as said vaccine is *S. pneumoniae* fructose-biphosphate aldolase.

In one preferred embodiment, the cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins for use as described above are *S. pneumoniae* proteins associated with an age-related immune response.

In another preferred embodiment, the aforementioned cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are lectins.

In a further preferred embodiment, the aforementioned cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are non-lectins.

In a still further preferred embodiment, the aforementioned cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are a mixture of lectins and non-lectins.

It is to be noted that when the *S. pneumoniae* proteins used in the aforementioned methods, compositions and vaccines are lectins, said methods, compositions and vaccines are particularly efficacious in the prevention of localized *S. pneumoniae* infections. In one preferred embodiment, the localized infections are infections of mucosal tissue, particularly of nasal and other respiratory mucosa.

Conversely, when the *S. pneumoniae* proteins used in the aforementioned methods, compositions and vaccines are non-lectins, said methods, compositions and vaccines are particularly efficacious in the prevention of intra-peritoneal and systemic *S. pneumoniae* infections.

All of the above and other characteristics and advantages of the present invention will be further understood from the following illustrative and non-limitative examples of preferred embodiments thereof.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a photograph of a Western blot in which the sera of mice immunized with (A) recombinant GAPDH and (B) recombinant fructose-biphosphate aldolase are seen to recognize the corresponding native proteins (CW) (in an electrophoretically-separated total cell wall protein preparation), and the corresponding recombinant protein (R).

Fig. 2 is a photograph of a Western blot in which the sera of mice immunized with pVAC constructs containing the cDNA of *S. pneumoniae* fructose-biphosphate aldolase (A) and GAPDH (B) are seen to recognize the corresponding native proteins from electrophoretically-separated total cell wall protein preparation. Sera obtained following immunization with the pVAC parental plasmid did not recognize either of the two proteins (C).

Fig. 3 is a graph describing the ability of recombinant GAPDH and fructose-biphosphate aldolase to elicit a protective immune response to intraperitoneal and intranasal challenge with a lethal dose of *S. pneumoniae* in the mouse model system.

Detailed Description of Preferred Embodiments

Vaccination protects individuals (and by extension, populations) from the harmful effects of pathogenic agents, such as bacteria, by inducing a specific immunological response to said pathogenic agents in the vaccinated subject.

Vaccines are generally, but not exclusively, administered by means of injection, generally by way of the intramuscular, intradermal or subcutaneous routes. Some vaccines may also be administered by the intravenous, intraperitoneal, nasal or oral routes.

The *S. pneumoniae*-protein containing preparations of the invention can be administered as either single or multiple doses of an effective amount of said protein. The term "effective amount" is used herein to indicate that the vaccine is administered in an amount sufficient to induce or boost a specific immune response, such that measurable amounts (or an increase in the measurable amounts) of one or more antibodies directed against the *S. pneumoniae* proteins used, may be detected in the serum or plasma of the vaccinated subject. The precise weight of protein or proteins that constitutes an "effective amount" will depend

upon many factors including the age, weight and physical condition of the subject to be vaccinated. The precise quantity also depends upon the capacity of the subject's immune system to produce antibodies, and the degree of protection desired. Effective dosages can be readily established by one of ordinary skill in the art through routine trials establishing dose response curves. However, for the purposes of the present invention, effective amounts of the compositions of the invention can vary from 0.01-1,000 µg/ml per dose, more preferably 0.1-500 µg/ml per dose, wherein the usual dose size is 1 ml.

The vaccines of the present invention will generally comprise an effective amount of one or more *S. pneumoniae* proteins as the active component, suspended in an appropriate vehicle. In the case of intranasal formulations, for example, said formulations may include vehicles that neither cause irritation to the nasal mucosa nor significantly disturb ciliary function. Diluents such as water, aqueous saline may also be added. The nasal formulations may also contain preservatives including, but not limited to, chlorobutanol and benzalkonium chloride. A surfactant may be present to enhance absorption of the subject proteins by the nasal mucosa. An additional mode of antigen delivery may include an encapsulation technique, which involves complex coacervation of gelatin and chondroitin sulfate (Azhari R, Leong K W. 1991. Complex coacervation of chondroitin sulfate and gelatin and its use for encapsulation and slow release of a model protein. Proc. Symp. Control. Rel. 18:617; Brown KE, Leong K, Huang CH, Dalal R, Green GD, Haimes HB, Jimenez PA, Bathon J. 1998.

Gelatin/chondroitin 6-sulfate microspheres for delivery of therapeutic proteins to the joint. Arthritis Rheum 41:2185-2195).

The present invention also encompasses within its scope the preparation and use of DNA vaccines. Vaccination methods and compositions of this type are well known in the art and are comprehensively described in many different articles, monographs and books (see, for example, chapter 11 of "Molecular Biotechnology: principles and applications of recombinant DNA" eds. B.R. Glick & J.J. Pasternak, ASM Press, Washington, D.C., 2nd edition, 1998). In principle, DNA vaccination is achieved by cloning the cDNAs for the desired immunogen into a suitable DNA vaccine vector, such as the pVAC vector (Invivogen). In the case of pVAC, the desired immunogenic proteins are targeted and anchored to the cell surface by cloning the gene of interest in frame between the IL2 signal sequence and the C-terminal transmembrane anchoring domain of human placental alkaline phosphatase. Such DNA vaccine vectors are specifically designed to stimulate humoral immune responses by intramuscular injection. The antigenic peptide produced on the surface of muscle cells is taken up by antigen presenting cells (APCs) and processed through the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) class II pathway.

Oral liquid preparations may be in the form of, for example, aqueous or oily suspension, solutions, emulsions, syrups or elixirs, or may be presented dry in tablet form or a product for reconstitution with water or other suitable vehicle before use. Such liquid preparations may contain

conventional additives such as suspending agents, emulsifying agents, non-aqueous vehicles (which may include edible oils), or preservative.

However, in general, the vaccines of the present invention would normally be administered parenterally, by the intramuscular, intravenous, intradermal or subcutaneous routes, either by injection or by a rapid infusion method. Compositions for parenteral administration include sterile aqueous or non-aqueous solutions, suspensions, and emulsions. Examples of non-aqueous solvents are propylene glycol, polyethylene glycol, vegetable oils such as olive oil, and injectable organic esters such as ethyl oleate. Besides the abovementioned inert diluents and solvents, the vaccine compositions of the invention can also include adjuvants, wetting agents, emulsifying and suspending agents, or sweetening, flavoring, or perfuming agents.

The aforementioned adjuvants are substances that can be used to augment a specific immune response. Normally, the adjuvant and the composition are mixed prior to presentation to the immune system, or presented separately, but into the same site of the subject being vaccinated. Adjuvants that may be usefully employed in the preparation of vaccines include: oil adjuvants (for example, Freund's complete and incomplete adjuvants, that will be used in animal experiments only and is forbidden from use in humans), mineral salts, alum, silica, kaolin, and carbon, polynucleotides and certain natural substances of microbial origin. An additional mode of antigen delivery may include an encapsulation technique, which involves complex

coacervation of gelatin and chondroitin sulfate (Azhari R, Leong K W. 1991. Complex coacervation of chondroitin sulfate and gelatin and its use for encapsulation and slow release of a model protein. Proc. Symp. Control. Rel. 18:617; Brown KE, Leong K, Huang CH, Dalal R, Green GD, Haimes HB, Jimenez PA, Bathon J. 1998. Gelatin/chondroitin 6-sulfate microspheres for delivery of therapeutic proteins to the joint. Arthritis Rheum 41:2185-2195).

Further examples of materials and methods useful in the preparation of vaccine compositions are well known to those skilled in the art. In addition, further details may be gleaned from Remington's Pharmaceutical Sciences, Mack Publishing Co, Easton, Pa, USA (1980).

The *S. pneumoniae* cell-wall and/or cell-membrane proteins for use in working the present invention may be obtained by directly purifying said proteins from cultures of *S. pneumoniae* by any of the standard techniques used to prepare and purify cell-surface proteins. Suitable methods are described in many biochemistry text-books, review articles and laboratory guides, including *inter alia* "Protein Structure: a practical approach" ed. T.E. Creighton, IRL Press, Oxford, UK (1989).

However, it is to be noted that such an approach suffers many practical limitations that present obstacles for producing commercially-viable quantities of the desired proteins. The *S. pneumoniae* proteins of the present invention may therefore be more conveniently prepared by means of recombinant biotechnological means, whereby the

gene for the *S. pneumoniae* protein of interest is isolated and inserted into an appropriate expression vector system (such as a plasmid or phage), which is then introduced into a host cell that will permit large-scale production of said protein by means of, for example, overexpression.

As a first stage, the location of the genes of interest within the *S. pneumoniae* genome may be determined by reference to a complete-genome database such as the TIGR database that is maintained by the Institute for Genomic Research (web site: http://www.tigr.org/). The selected sequence may, where appropriate, be isolated directly by the use of appropriate restriction endonucleases, or more effectively by means of PCR amplification. Suitable techniques are described in, for example, US patent Nos. 4,683,195, 4,683,202, 4,800,159, 4,965,188, as well as in Innis *et al.* eds., *PCR Protocols: A guide to method and applications*.

Following amplification and/or restriction endonuclease digestion, the desired gene or gene fragment is ligated either initially into a cloning vector, or directly into an expression vector that is appropriate for the chosen host cell type. In the case of the *S. pneumoniae* proteins, *Escherichia coli* is the most useful expression host. However, many other cell types may be also be usefully employed including other bacteria, yeast cells, insect cells and mammalian cell systems.

High-level expression of the desired protein within the host cell may be achieved in several different ways (depending on

the chosen expression vector) including expression as a fusion protein (e.g. with factor Xa or thrombin), expression as a His-tagged protein, dual vector systems, expression systems leading to incorporation of the recombinant protein inside inclusion bodies etc. The recombinant protein will then need to be isolated from the cell membrane, interior, inclusion body or (in the case of secreted proteins) the culture medium, by one of the many methods known in the art.

All of the above recombinant DNA and protein purification techniques are well known to all skilled artisans in the field, the details of said techniques being described in many standard works including "Molecular cloning: a laboratory manual" by Sambrook, J., Fritsch, E.F. & Maniatis, T., Cold Spring Harbor, NY, 2nd ed., 1989, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

The following examples are provided for illustrative purposes and in order to more particularly explain and describe the present invention. The present invention, however, is not limited to the particular embodiments disclosed in the examples.

Example 1

Prevention of *S. pneumoniae* infection in mice by inoculation with *S. pneumoniae* cell wall protein fractions

Methods:

Bacterial cells:

The bacterial strain used in this study was an *S. pneumoniae* serotype 3 strain. The bacteria were plated onto tryptic soy agar supplemented with 5% sheep erythrocytes and incubated for 17-18 hours at 37°C under anaerobic conditions. The bacterial cells were then transferred to Todd-Hewitt broth supplemented with 0-5% yeast extract and grown to mid-late log phase. Bacteria were harvested and the pellets were stored at -70°C.

Purification of cell wall proteins:

Bacterial pellets were resuspended in phosphate buffered saline (PBS). The resulting pellets were then treated with mutanolysin to release cell wall (CW) components. Supernatants containing the CW proteins were then harvested. Subsequently, the bacteria were sonicated and centrifuged and the resulting pellet containing the bacteria membranes (m) were lysed with 0.5% triton X-100.

Fractionation of the cell wall protein mixture:

Cell wall protein-containing supernatants were allowed to adhere to fetuin (a highly glycosylated pan-lectin binding protein) that was covalently bound to a sepharose column. Non-adherent molecules, obtained from the flow-through fraction were predominantly non-lectin molecules, while the

column-adherent lectins were eluted with 50 mM ammonium acetate at pH 3.5.

Experimental: *S. pneumoniae* cell wall (CW) proteins were separated into lectin (CW-L) and non-lectin (NL) fractions by fetuin affinity chromatography, as described hereinabove. C57BL/6 and BALB/c mice were vaccinated with *S. pneumoniae* total CW (CW-T), CW-L and CW-NL protein preparations mixed with Freund's adjuvant, by means of the following procedure: each mouse was primed with 25 micrograms of CW-T, CW-NL and CW-L protein preparations intramuscularly, with complete Freund's adjuvant (CFA) and boosted with incomplete Freund's adjuvant (IFA), 4 and 7 weeks following priming. Western blots of the abovementioned protein preparations were probed with sera obtained a week after the last immunization. Animals were then challenged intranasally (IN) or intraperitoneally (IP) with 10^8 cfu of *S. pneumoniae* serotype 3, that caused 100% mortality in control mice immunized with CFA and boosted with IFA only within 96 hours post-inoculation. Vaccination with CW-L elicited partial protection against *S. Pneumoniae* IN and IP challenge (50% and 45% respectively). Vaccination with CW-T and CW-NL proteins elicited 70% and 65% protection against IP challenge, respectively. Vaccination with CW-T and CW-NL proteins elicited 85% and 50% protection against IN inoculation, respectively.

Example 2

Determination of age-related immunoreactivity to *S. pneumoniae* surface proteins

The following study was carried out in order to investigate the age-related development of immunoreactivity to *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and cell membrane proteins.

Operating as described hereinabove in Example 1, a fraction containing cell wall proteins was obtained from a clinical isolate of *S. pneumoniae*. In addition, cell membrane proteins were recovered by solubilizing the membrane pellet (described hereinabove in Example 1) in 0.5% Triton X-100. The cell wall and cell membrane proteins were separated by means of two-dimensional gel electrophoresis, wherein the polyacrylamide gel isoelectric focusing in the one dimension and the proteins were separated using sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE) in the other dimension.

The ability of serum prepared from blood samples of children aged 1.5, 2.5 and 3.5 years and adults to recognize the separated *S. pneumoniae* proteins was investigated by Western blot analysis according to the methods described by Rapola S. *et al.* [J. Infect. Dis. (2000) 182: 1146-52].

Putative identification of the separated protein spots obtained following the 2D-electrophoresis was achieved by

the use of the Matrix Assisted Laser Desorption/Ionization mass spectrometery (MALDI-MS) technique.

Results of the above analysis are summarized in the following table:

Age-dependent immunoreactivity to S. pneumoniae surface proteins(total,pH 4-6.5)

spot nr.	= x protei per spot	homology	age 1.5	age 2.5	age 3.5	adult
1	2	DNA K/phosphoenolpyruvate protein phosphotransferase	*	*	*	*
3	1	trigger factor	*	*	*	*
4	2	60kDa chaperonin (proteinCPN60) (GroEL protein)	**	*	**	***
		elongation factor G/tetracycline resistance protein tetO (TET(O))				
7	2	Glutamyl-tRNA Amidotransferase subunit A/N utilization substance protein A homolog.	*	**	?	***
11	2	Oligopeptide-binding protein amiA/aliA/aliB precursor	?	?	?	?
		hypothetical zinc metallopeptidase in SCAA 5'region (ORF 6)			*	**
12	1	pneumolysin (thiol-activated cytolysin)	*		*	**
13	1	L-lactate dehydrogenase	*	**	*	?
14	1	Glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH)	*	**	***	***
15	1	fructose-bisphosphate aldolase	**	***	***	***
16	1	UDP-glucose 4-epimerase	**	*	?	?
17	2	elongation factor G/tetracycline resistance protein tetO (TET(O))	*	**	?	?
		sep binding protein (vpA/BipA	***	***	***	***
18	1	pyruvate oxidase		*	**	?
22	1	Glutamyl-tRNA synthetase	*		*	*
23	1	NADP-specific glutamate dehydrogenase	*	**	***	***
24	1	Glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH)	*	**	**	**
25	1	Enolase (2-phosphoglycerate dehydratase)	*	**	**	**
27	1	phosphoglycerate kinase	*	*	*	?
29	1	glucose-6-phosphate isomerase			?	?
30	2	40S ribosomal protein S1/6-phosphogluconate dehydrogenase			?	?
31	1	aminopeptidase C				
new spots						
33				*	**	***
55/62			***	***	***	***
57/63			*	*	**	**
58			**	*	?	?

The data presented in the preceding table indicate that there is an age-dependent development of immunoreactivity to several *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and cell surface proteins.

Example 3

Prevention of *S. pneumoniae* infection in mice by inoculation with recombinantly-expressed *S. pneumoniae* cell surface proteins

Cloning of immunogenic S. pneumoniae surface proteins:

S. pneumoniae fructose-biphosphate aldolase (hereinafter referred to as "aldolase") and Glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) proteins were cloned into the pHAT expression vector (Clontech) and expressed in *E. coli* BL21 cells (Promega Corp., USA) using standard laboratory procedures. Following lysis of the BL21 cells, recombinant proteins were purified by the use of immobilized metal affinity chromatography (IMAC) on Ni-NTa columns (Qiagen) and eluted with imidazole. In a separate set of experiments, *S. pneumoniae* aldolase cDNAs were cloned into the pVAC expression vector (Invivogen), a DNA vaccine vector specifically designed to stimulate a humoral immune response by intramuscular injection. Antigenic proteins are targeted and anchored to the cell surface by cloning the gene of interest in frame between the IL2 signal sequence and the C-terminal transmembrane anchoring domain of human placental alkaline phosphatase. The antigenic peptide produced on the surface of muscle cells is taken up by antigen presenting

cells (APCs) and processed through the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) class II pathway.

Immunization:

BALB/c and C57BL/6 mice (7 week old females) were intramuscularly immunized with 25 micrograms of either recombinant aldolase or recombinant GAPDH proteins together with either Freund's complete adjuvant (CFA) or an alum adjuvant. In a separate set of experiments, mice of the aforementioned strains were intramuscularly immunized with 50 micrograms of the pVAC-*aldolase* or pVAC-*GAPDH* constructs that were described hereinabove.

Assessment of immunogenicity:

The immunogenicity of recombinant *S. pneumoniae* aldolase and GAPDH proteins (1-2 micrograms of each one) was assessed by Western blot assay using serum of mice that had been immunized with either total cell wall proteins (CW-T) or with one of the recombinant proteins (as described hereinabove). The results obtained (Fig. 1) indicate that the sera of the immunized animals recognized both recombinant GAPDH and aldolase proteins, and the native GAPDH and aldolase proteins present in the CW-T mixture.

In a separate set of experiments the serum of mice that had been immunized with the pVAC-*aldolase* or pVAC-*GAPDH* constructs, as described above, was used to detect native aldolase and GAPDH, respectively in Western blots obtained from SDS-PAGE separations of CW-T proteins. The results obtained (Fig. 2) indicate that inoculation with the pVAC-

based constructs is capable of eliciting an immune response. Sera of mice vaccinated with the parental pVAC plasmid (i.e. without insert) did not, however, react with the CW-T proteins.

Protective vaccination:

Following immunization with the recombinant proteins as described hereinabove, the mice were challenged intranasally with a lethal dose of 10^8 CFU of *S. pneumoniae* serotype 3. None of the control animals (immunization with either CFA or alum only) survived the bacterial challenge. However, 36% of the animals immunized with the recombinant aldolase protein, in CFA and 36% of the animals immunized with the same proteins in alum survived the challenge. Following immunization with the pVAC-*aldolase* construct, 20% of the animals survived. With regard to recombinant GAPDH, 36% of the animals immunized with this recombinant protein (in either of the abovementioned adjuvants) survived. Immunization with the pVAC-*GAPDH* construct, led to a survival rate of 20%, as shown in Fig. 3.

Example 4

***S. pneumoniae* immunogenic proteins**

Operating essentially as in Example 2, the ability of serum prepared from blood samples of children aged 1.5, 2.5 and 3.5 years and adults to recognize the separated *S. pneumoniae* proteins was investigated by Western blot analysis according to the methods described by Rapola S. *et al.* [J. Infect. Dis. (2000) 182: 1146-52].

Identification of the separated protein spots obtained following the 2D-electrophoresis was achieved by the use of the Matrix Assisted Laser Desorption/Ionization mass spectrometery (MALDI-MS) technique, and comparison of the partial amino acid sequences obtained thereby with the sequences contained in the TIGR4 and/or R6 databases (maintained by The Institute for Genomic Research).

The cell surface proteins found to be immunogenic (classified according to their cellular location - cell membrane or cell wall) are summarized in the following table:

List of immunogenic proteins

spot	cell wall proteins: homology to	accession code from TIGR 4 or R6
1	Phosphoenolpyruvate protein phosphotransferase	NP345645
2	Probable phosphomannomutase	NP346006
3	Trigger factor	NP344923
4	Elongation factor G/tetracycline resistance protein teto (TET(O))	NP344811/P72533
5	DNA directed RNA polymerase alpha-chain	G95027
6	NADH oxidase	NP345923
7	Glutamyl-tRNA Amidotransferase subunit A	NP344960
	N utilization substance protein A homolog.	P32727
8	XAA-HIS dipeptidase	P45494
	Cell division protein ftsz.	NP346105
11	Hypothetical zinc metalloproteinase in SCAA 5'region (ORF 6)	P42358
13	L-lactate dehydrogenase	NP345686
14	Glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH)	NP346439
15	Fructose-biphosphate aldolase	NP345117
16	UDP-glucose 4-epimerase	NP346261
	GTP binding protein typA/BipA	NP358192
21	GMP synthase	NP345899
22	Glutamyl-tRNA synthetase	NP346492
23	NADP-specific glutamate dehydrogenase	NP345679
26	Elongation factor TS	NP346622
27	Phosphoglycerate kinase	AAK74657
28	Probable pyridine nucleotide-disulfide oxido-reductase	P77212
30	40S ribosomal protein S1	NP345350
	6-phosphogluconate dehydrogenase	NP357929
31	Aminopeptidase C	NP344819
33	Carbamoyl-phosphate synthase, large subunit	NP345739
57	PTS system, mannose-specific IIAB components	NP344822
58	Ribosomal protein S2	NP346623
62	Dihydroorotate dehydrogenase	NP358460
65	Aspartate carbamoyltransferase	NP345741
	membrane proteins: homology to	
14	Elongation factor Tu	NP345941
19	Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein A (PsipA)	NP344634
22	Phosphoglycerate kinase	NP358035
40	ABC transporter, substrate-binding protein	NP344690
	lectins: homology to	
10	Endopeptidase O	NP346087
14	Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein B (PsipB)	NP358083
	Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein C (PsipC)	NP345081

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While specific embodiments of the invention have been described for the purpose of illustration, it will be understood that the invention may be carried out in practice by skilled persons with many modifications, variations and adaptations, without departing from its spirit or exceeding the bounds of the present invention.

Throughout this specification, including the claims, where the context permits, the term "comprise" and variants thereof such as "comprises" or "comprising" are to be interpreted as including the stated integer or integers without necessarily excluding any other integers.

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The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. A method for preventing infection of a mammalian subject with *S. pneumoniae*, wherein said method comprises administering to said subject an effective amount of one or more isolated *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins, wherein said proteins are associated with an age-related immune response and are selected from the group consisting of:
phosphoenolpyruvate protein phosphotransferase, phospho-mannomutase, trigger factor, elongation factor G, tetracycline resistance protein (tetO), DNA directed RNA polymerase alpha-chain, NADH oxidase, glutamyl-tRNA amidotransferase subunit A, N utilization substance protein A homolog, XAA-HIS dipeptidase, cell division protein ftsz, zinc metalloproteinase in SCAA 5'region (ORF 6), L-lactate dehydrogenase, glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) ; fructose-biphosphate aldolase, UDP-glucose 4-epimerase, GTP binding protein typA/BipA, GMP synthase, glutamyl-tRNA synthetase, NADP-specific glutamate dehydrogenase, Elongation factor TS, phosphoglycerate kinase (cell wall protein), pyridine nucleotide-disulfide oxido-reductase, 40S ribosomal protein S1, 6-phosphogluconate dehydrogenase, aminopeptidase C, carbomyl-phosphate synthase (large subunit), PTS system mannose-specific IIAB components, ribosomal protein S2, dihydroorotate dehydrogenase, aspartate carbamoyltransferase, elongation factor Tu, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein A (PsipA), phosphogycerate kinase (cell membrane protein), ABC transporter substrate-binding protein endopeptidase O, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein B (PsipB), Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein C (PsipC).

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein one or more adjuvants are optionally administered to the subject

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together with the one or more isolated cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins.

3. The method according to either claim 1 or 2, wherein the *S. pneumoniae* protein to be administered is selected from glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) and fructose-biphosphate aldolase.

4. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the one or more isolated *S. pneumoniae* proteins to be administered are lectins.

5. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the one or more isolated *S. pneumoniae* proteins to be administered are non-lectins.

6. A vaccine composition comprising as the active ingredient one or more isolated cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins isolated from *S. pneumoniae*, wherein said proteins are associated with an age-related immune response and are selected from the group consisting of: phosphoenolpyruvate protein phosphotransferase, phospho-mannomutase, trigger factor, elongation factor G, tetracycline resistance protein (tetO), DNA directed RNA polymerase alpha-chain, NADH oxidase, glutamyl-tRNA amidotransferase subunit A, N utilization substance protein A homolog, XAA-HIS dipeptidase, cell division protein ftsz, zinc metalloproteinase in SCAA 5'region (ORF 6), L-lactate dehydrogenase, glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH), fructose-biphosphate aldolase, UDP-glucose 4-epimerase, GTP binding protein typA/BipA, GMP synthase, glutamyl-tRNA synthetase, NADP-specific glutamate dehydrogenase, Elongation factor TS, phosphoglycerate kinase (cell wall protein), pyridine nucleotide-disulfide oxido-reductase, 40S ribosomal protein S1, 6-phosphogluconate dehydrogenase, aminopeptidase C, carbomyl-phosphate synthase

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(large subunit), PTS system mannose-specific IIAB components, ribosomal protein S2, dihydroorotate dehydrogenase, aspartate carbamoyltransferase, elongation factor Tu, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein A (PsipA), phosphogycerate kinase (cell membrane protein), ABC transporter substrate-binding protein, endopeptidase O, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein B (PsipB), Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein C (PsipC), optionally together with one or more additives.

7. The vaccine composition according to claim 6, wherein the optional additive is an adjuvant.

8. The vaccine composition according to either claim 6 or 7, wherein said composition comprises an effective amount of *S. pneumoniae* having either glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) or fructose-biphosphate aldolase as the active ingredient.

9. The vaccine composition according to any one of claims 6 to 8, for use in preventing *S. pneumoniae* infection of the mammalian subjects inoculated therewith.

10. The vaccine composition according to any one of claims 6 to 9, wherein the one or more isolated *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are lectins.

11. The vaccine composition according to any one of claims 6 to 9, wherein the one or more isolated *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins are non-lectins.

12. The use of one or more isolated *S. pneumoniae* cell wall and/or cell membrane proteins in the preparation of a vaccine for use in the prevention of diseases and carrier states caused by said *S. pneumoniae*, wherein said proteins are associated with an age-related immune response and are

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selected from the group consisting of: phosphoenolpyruvate protein phosphotransferase, phospho- mannomutase, trigger factor, elongation factor G, tetracycline resistance protein (tetO), DNA directed RNA polymerase alpha-chain, NADH oxidase, glutamyl-tRNA amidotransferase subunit A, N utilization substance protein A homolog, XAA-HIS dipeptidase, cell division protein ftsz, zinc metalloproteinase in SCAA 5'region (ORF 6), L-lactate dehydrogenase, glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH), fructose-biphosphate aldolase, UDP-glucose 4-epimerase, GTP binding protein typA/BipA, GMP synthase, glutamyl-tRNA synthetase, NADP-specific glutamate dehydrogenase, Elongation factor TS, phosphoglycerate kinase (cell wall protein), pyridine nucleotide-disulfide oxido-reductase, 40S ribosomal protein S1, 6-phosphogluconate dehydrogenase, aminopeptidase C, carbomyl-phosphate synthase (large subunit), PTS system mannose-specific IIAB components, ribosomal protein S2, dihydroorotate dehydrogenase, aspartate carbamoyltransferase, elongation factor Tu, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein A (PsipA), phosphogycerate kinase (cell membrane protein), ABC transporter substrate-binding protein, endopeptidase 0, Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein B (PsipB) and Pneumococcal surface immunogenic protein C (PsipC).

13. The use according to claim 12, wherein the isolated protein used in the preparation of the vaccine is selected from *S. pneumoniae* glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) and fructose-biphosphate aldolase.

14. The use according to either claim 12 or 13, wherein the isolated *S. pneumoniae* protein (s) used in the preparation of the vaccine are lectins.

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15. The use according to either claim 12 or 13, wherein the *S. pneumoniae* protein (s) used in the preparation of the vaccine are non- lectins.

16. A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, and substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying examples.

17. A use as claimed in any one of claims 12 to 15, and substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying examples.

Dated: 17 March 2009

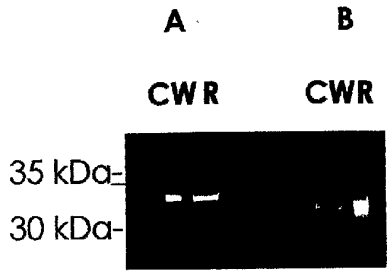


FIG. 1

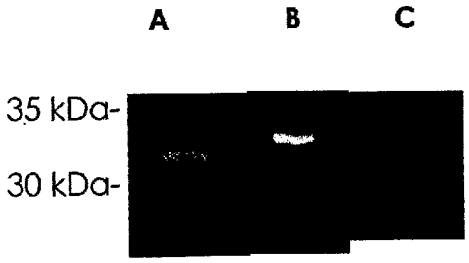


FIG. 2

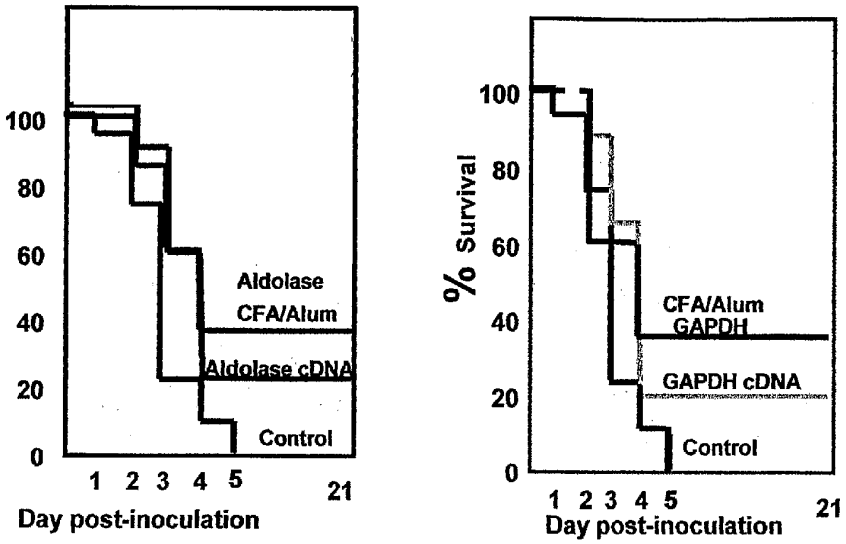

100
80
60
40
20
0
Aldolase
CFA/Alum
Aldolase cDNA
Control
1 2 3 4 5
21
Day post-inoculation
% Survival
100
80
60
40
20
0
CFA/Alum
GAPDH
GAPDH cDNA
Control
1 2 3 4 5
21
Day post-inoculation

FIG. 3

2/2