

Editorial

Fighting HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria: one world, one partnership

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The European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) was founded in 2003 in response to the global burden of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Its mission is to accelerate the development of new or improved clinical interventions against these diseases with a focus on supporting phase II and III clinical trials including capacity development. EDCTP organises biennial forums that bring together researchers, programme managers, policy makers, funders and other stakeholders working on poverty-related diseases. These forums have become a major platform for discussing matters pertaining to poverty-related diseases in Africa. The theme of the Fifth EDCTP Forum, held in Arusha, Tanzania, from 12 to 14 October 2009, was 'Fighting HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria – one world, one partnership'. This underpinned the principle of EDCTP of working in partnerships.

Four hundred and fifty participants from 49 countries including 26 from Africa, 15 from Europe and others from Australia, Cambodia, China, Cuba, Indonesia, Nepal, Peru and the United States attended. There were presentations from many partners from the African AIDS Vaccine Programme (AAVP), the African Malaria Network Trust (AMANET), AERAS Global TB Vaccine Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the European Vaccines Initiative (EVI), the Enhancing Support for Strengthening the Effectiveness of National Capacity Efforts (ESSENCE), the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM), the Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) and the Wellcome Trust. There were also four satellite meetings and workshops on Ownership of Research Outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa; Universal Standards for Clinical Trials in Practice; ESSENCE funders meeting to explore synergy; and a Round-table Meeting of African Regional Economic Communities on the African representation to EDCTP-EEIG General Assembly. EDCTP launched awards for outstanding African scientists: the senior scientist award went to Alexis Nzila of Kenya

Medical Research Institute, Wellcome Trust Research Centre. Dominique Pepper from the Institute of Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine, University of Cape Town, South Africa, won the junior scientist award.

The forum comprised plenary and parallel sessions during which 58 oral presentations, 81 short electronic presentations and 69 posters were presented, covering a wide range of topics. Keynote addresses were delivered on the current state of affairs in research and control of HIV/AIDS by Dr Anatoli Kamali, of malaria by Professor Abdoulaye Djimdé and of tuberculosis by Professor Willem Hanekom. Articles based on these are published as reviews in this issue of the journal.

Forum participants met in the penultimate plenary session to identify research gaps and needs and made several recommendations to EDCTP. These were as follows:

HIV/AIDS

- Continue with research on preventive HIV vaccines and microbicides including exploring efficacy of anti-retroviral-based combinations.
- Conduct more research to answer treatment strategy issues. These should include when to start treatment; effect of treatment on immune reconstitution inflammatory syndrome (IRIS); when to switch and what to switch to; management of HIV-TB co-infections including strategies on prophylaxis, vaccines, diagnosis and treatment and reduction in mortality prior to and soon after treatment initiation.
- High priority should be given to customised interventions and the needs of specific populations such as discordant couples.
- High priority should be given to research on implementing and scaling up interventions of proven

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efficacy such as delivery models. These may include antiretroviral regimens, microbicides and Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) strategies.

- Taking into account the ongoing studies on PrEP, it was suggested that currently there are no specific research gaps that need addressing.

Tuberculosis

- To increase efforts to improve diagnosis of tuberculosis. This should include studies on rapid assays, improvements in microscopy for point-of-care diagnosis and diagnostic tests to differentiate latent and active infections.
- To identify strategies to improve active case detection, reduction in diagnostic delays, disease burden reduction, optimization of current interventions and comparison of inpatient and outpatient care models on infection control, drug resistance and cost effectiveness.
- Improvement of prophylactic, diagnostics, treatment and vaccine strategies of HIV-TB co-infections.
- Research on shortening and simplification of TB treatment.
- Improvement in the management of childhood tuberculosis.
- Prioritization of nanotechnology and research on other novel drug delivery systems to improve bio-availability.
- Research on bioinformatics.
- Mechanisms of drug resistance for newer drugs including gatifloxacin and moxifloxacin.
- Research and development of newer vaccines and improvement of BCG.
- Advances in the treatment of extra-pulmonary tuberculosis.

Malaria

- It was recommended that EDCTP should fund more vaccine clinical trials in addition to the GMZ2 and

vectored vaccine AdCh63 MVA-TRAP trials that it is currently funding.

- It was observed that research capacity to evaluate malaria vaccines in sub-Saharan Africa is a major gap that needs agent attention. This was, especially in staff, equipment and infrastructure including staff retention, maintenance of equipment and support to clinical trials sites between trials.
- Focus should be put on conducting studies on ACTs in special target groups such as infants.
- Following the reported *in-vitro* and *in-vivo* artemisinin parasite resistance to ACTs, research and development of non-artemisinin combinations should be supported.
- Research and development of intravenous artesunate for severe malaria currently hampered by availability of GMP grade material should be prioritized.
- Research on intermittent preventive treatment in pregnancy (IPTp) and infants (IPTi) should continue.
- There is a great need to for more safety and PK data on ACTs and research for alternative new drugs.
- Research on malaria elimination strategies including evaluation of combination interventions and optimization of the coverage of malaria treatment and prevention services of products of proven efficacy.

These recommendations will be considered further by the EDCTP scientific strategy board and other constituents when defining future research priorities.

The next forum will be in 2011.

Acknowledgement

We thank everyone who has contributed to make the Fifth EDCTP Forum a success. This includes among others the European Member States, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and all our partners who have made generous donations. Special thanks go to all speakers and participants, the organizing committee and our hosts – the National Institute of Medical Research of Tanzania under the leadership of Dr Mwele Malecela.

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