

South-South Networking: Need for Nodes of Excellence

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Rationale

- *Challenged by major communicable diseases*
- *Challenged by poor/weak clinical Services and high mortality caused by avoidable/preventable conditions*
- *Challenged by inadequate human resource capacity*
- *Threatened by upcoming non communicable disease*
- *Challenged by weak infrastructure for research and discoveries in support of clinical practices*

Purpose

- To create and maintain sufficient capacity within Africa to formulate and conduct clinical research with focus on Poverty Related Diseases of African relevance in order to accelerate the creation of new drugs and tools for treatment and to raise the quality of clinical practices

Objectives

1. To create and/or strengthen identified institutions to become specialised research and training centres in clinical research
2. To strengthen such centres to have strong capacities in basic required skills for clinical research such as GCP, GLP, Data management and research ethics
3. To identify and strengthen Centres of higher learning to host quality training courses in essential basic and applied sciences related to the study and control of major poverty related diseases
4. To enhance research collaboration and networking by creating fellowships and exchange programmes between African institutions coordinated by the identified Centres.

Strategies

1. Identify and strengthen the capacities of selected African institutions to conduct and host training in specific, but fundamental areas of clinical research on poverty related diseases.
2. Accredite the Centres as regional hubs or Nodes of Excellence for training
3. Conduct regional research methodology workshops to identify talents in the field identified in 1 above and support them to develop research proposals for their MSc or PhD and sponsor them to train in the identified Nodes above.
4. To require and support the identified Nodes of Excellence to establish fellowships and exchange programs in partnership with other institutions within their region

Methodology

- Assessment of institutional capacity
- Invitation to apply for accreditation as EDCTP Nodes of Excellence
- Centres with insufficient capacity can apply to increase capacity in one of identified areas
 - GCP
 - GLP
 - Data Management
 - Quality control
 - Ethics

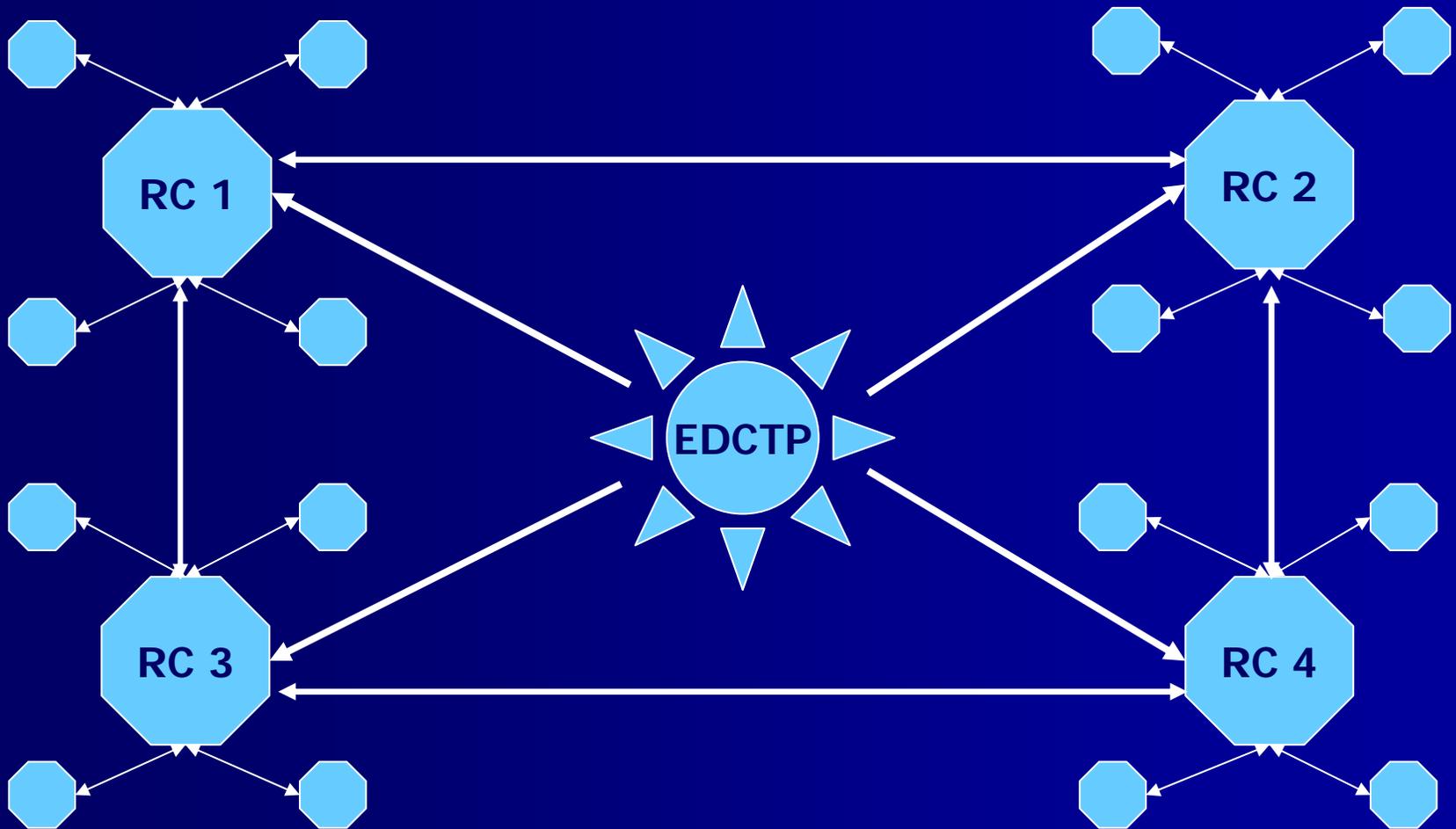
Activities

Search and accreditation of institutions	Secretariat
Search and identification of emerging institutions	Local Institutions
Strengthening training of and in accredited institutions through scholarships young scientists identified through methodology workshops	EDCTP
Provide support for exchange programs between the institutions	EDCTP
Strengthen upcoming institutions through scholarships of scientists in areas where they have gaps	EDCTP
Establish and support a training program for PhD and MSc in specialised areas identified to fill institutional gaps	EDCTP

Outputs

- Mass production of PhD and MSc graduates who are linked with their institutions and who have been trained in relevant areas and within their working environment
- Establishment of strong regional networks in clinical research fields linked to EDCTP and generating under EDCTP principles.
- Enhanced Capacity to access Global Funds

Conceptual Framework



Advantages of this approach

- Maximise effective use of limited resources
- Accelerate production in numbers and quality clinical research scientists
- Increase career opportunities and creating enabling environment / incentives
- Retain better trained scientists and attract those in the diasporas
- Provide better participation and ownership of the means for solving own health problems
- Allow for more equitable partnerships with Northern Institutions

Why Institutional base

- Ensure integration and long term sustainability
- Easy to get Government recognition and funding commitments
- Better suited to create generations of scientists
- Link research and training broadening career opportunities and development

Strengths

- There is already in existence African Research and Training Institutions at different levels of Competence
- There is political will and African Governments have committed to achieve Millennium Development Goals in the Abuja Declaration

Opportunities

- This approach fits well with NEPAD strategy of creating Centres of Excellence within sub-regional framework and strengthening South –South Cooperation. Easy AU acceptance
- It also accelerates capacity building component of EDCTP
- Enables south-south partnerships to access other funding

CONCLUSIONS

- We suggest the creation of strong networks around nodes of excellence among Southern academic and research institutions to accelerate the generation of quality scientists in sufficient numbers to mitigate the high disease burden. It will provide the required enabling environment offering better career opportunities and incentives preventing brain drain. The South and Africa in particular will better have active participation and ownership of the means of solving its own health problems. It will furthermore raise the professional quality and capacity of southern institutions to forge better and equal partnership with northern institutions.