



European & Developing Countries
Clinical Trials Partnership

Meeting summary: 'EDCTP: African-European partnership for global health benefit'

A meeting hosted and chaired by Dr Daniel Poulter MP, Chair of the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Health (APPG-GH), in partnership with the APPG on Malaria and NTDs, APPG on HIV and AIDS, APPG on Tuberculosis and APPG on Population, Development and Reproductive Health

Monday, 27 February 2017, 17:00-18:30
Portcullis House, London

Background

The European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) is a public-public partnership between countries in Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, and the European Union (EU), which is focused on combating some of the greatest areas of unmet medical need in sub-Saharan Africa; infectious diseases that blight the lives of millions. Driven by the needs of the South and a genuine 'partnership of equals', EDCTP is committed to supporting high-quality collaborative clinical research that accelerates the development of new or improved medical interventions to prevent or treat HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected infectious diseases that have the potential to make a real difference to the lives of millions of people across sub-Saharan Africa. This meeting aimed to share first-hand information on some of the achievements and palpable life changing outcomes from the partnership that have come to fruition through the UK's involvement in EDCTP projects. More than 100 participants attended the meeting, including members of the UK Parliament, representatives of UK-based funders, UK researchers, NGOs, private foundations and the private sector.



Presentations

Following an introduction on the EDCTP programme and business model by Dr Mark Palmer (EDCTP Board Chairperson) and Dr Michael Makanga (EDCTP Executive Director), the development of paediatric fixed-dose combination therapy for HIV-infected children in two EDCTP-funded trials entitled 'Children with HIV in Africa Pharmacokinetics and Adherence of Simple antiretroviral regimens (CHAPAS)': CHAPAS-1 and CHAPAS-3, was presented as a case study of the impact of the programme. CHAPAS-1 resulted in the first paediatric antiretroviral formula which was rolled out on a large scale. CHAPAS-3 developed paediatric formulas for a new generation of antiretrovirals. Dr Veronica Mulenga (Paediatrician at the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka, Zambia) and Professor Diana Gibb (Programme Leader of the Paediatric Programme of trials and cohorts at the MRC Clinical Trials Unit at University College London, United Kingdom), presented these trials. A short [video](#) was shown, which demonstrated the direct social impact of this EDCTP-funded collaborative research on the lives of patients and documented the journey of a small boy from Malawi, highlighting the improved health and life opportunities afforded to him through access to paediatric antiretroviral formulations.



Panel and audience discussion

A panel comprising Dr Leonardo Simão (EDCTP High Representative for Africa), Professor Marcel Tanner (EDCTP High Representative for Europe), Dr Cissy Kityo, (Deputy Executive Director of the Joint Clinical Research Centre, Uganda), Dr Line Matthiessen (Acting Director for Health Research in the Directorate General Research &



Innovation at the European Commission) and Sir Brian Greenwood (Professor of Clinical Tropical Medicine at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, United Kingdom) discussed the value of EDCTP in generating new evidence on medical interventions against poverty-related diseases.

Dr Simão highlighted the uniqueness of EDCTP as **a true European-African partnership**, as reflected in the composition of its governance, advisory structures and the constitution of the research consortia that it supports. Furthermore, he explained EDCTP's **long-term perspective on capacity strengthening** and its intentional development of local African scientific excellence and leadership, highlighting that over 70% of projects supported in the first EDCTP programme had been led by African coordinators. Dr Kityo, a recipient of multiple EDCTP grants, including as a Senior Fellow and a collaborator on the CHAPAS trials, highlighted how EDCTP grants had elevated the status of her institution as an internationally competitive clinical research organisation. Moreover, she explained that these grants had been instrumental in her own **personal development and career progression**, directly contributing to her emergence as a leading female African researcher on HIV resistance. Dr Matthiessen stressed the important role of EDCTP as a global player in health research and in meeting the commitments of the EU to the **Sustainable Development Goals**. She emphasised the



power of collaboration between the EDCTP Participating States and the EU to maximise the impact of investments and highlighted the EDCTP governance structure as a **model for equal partnership** between the North and the South. Drawing on his extensive experience of conducting clinical research and capacity development in sub-Saharan Africa, Sir Greenwood called attention to **the borderless global nature of infectious diseases** and underlined the need for and added value of multilateral initiatives such as EDCTP and WHO in facilitating the conduct of multinational clinical trials. Furthermore, the importance of investing in the training and development of scientists from affected countries to ensure a growing body of prominent African scientists in clinical research in sub-Saharan Africa was highlighted, in addition to the need to overcome language barriers and encourage greater cooperation between Anglophone and Francophone researchers. In this context, Professor Tanner underscored the importance of fostering **mutual learning for change**, emphasising the need for reciprocal knowledge exchange between the North and the South and the shared benefits of a stronger European-African relationship and increased capacity to conduct clinical trials in Africa, thus reflecting the very essence of the EDCTP partnership.

With audience input, discussion ensued around the next steps following the completion of successful clinical trials such as CHAPAS-1/3 and **the need to ensure access** to the product(s) concerned. In the case of the CHAPAS trials, it was clarified that the results had already been translated into policy and evidence-based practice, with WHO guidelines now advocating for testing and treatment across Africa and globally, and the logistical procedures mobilised to ensure that the drugs reach patients. Furthermore, it was noted that further clinical trials, such as the follow-on CHAPAS-4 trial, are planned to evaluate new paediatric drug formulations to optimise second-line HIV treatment. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that there remained a need for **health systems strengthening** and ensuring sufficient capacity to roll out products developed through such trials. It was highlighted that one of EDCTP's objectives was to ensure closer cooperation with development assistance, to **close the gap between research and development** and ensure coordination of efforts in the implementation of research findings and the advancement of the health systems that support them. Other aspects discussed included the challenge of ensuring that clinical research is multidisciplinary and takes into account anthropological approaches, in addition to the need to address imbalances in the success rates for applicants in the different African regions through mechanisms such as the **EDCTP Regional Networks**. Finally, in the context of Brexit and future UK participation in EDCTP, it was clarified that currently UK researchers remain eligible to participate in and receive funding through EDCTP-funded projects. Furthermore, it was hoped that the UK would continue to collaborate with European and other international partners in science, research and innovation, and thus there was every reason to hope that the UK would remain as an EDCTP Participating State following Brexit.

