

## Note from the Africa Office



Dear Readers,

It is my privilege and pleasure to introduce to you the July newsletter. In this edition, we are delighted to remind our stakeholders of the forthcoming Sixth EDCTP Forum to be held on 9 October to 12 October in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. We also wish to draw your attention to the recent release of the 2010 EDCTP annual report. This report has a new interactive feature providing a direct link to EDCTP funded activities. This helps us to see the short-term achievements in the context of the long term trends of the organisation. The Partnership continues to move in a positive direction with agreements on funding 22 new projects finalised in this quarter and new calls for proposals to be published in August 2011.

A snap shot of exciting news from the frontlines features various activities including EARNEST, a trial leading the field in optimising second-line HIV therapy, the malaria in pregnancy consortium activities, regional networks progress and developments in ethics capacity citing Kenyan and Nigerian experiences. Moreover, EDCTP has continued to engage with policy makers and African governments. Visits to Malawi and Sierra Leone are reported on.

Finally, please join me in warmly welcoming our new staff to the EDCTP Secretariat, Ms Nancy Kensmil (Administration Officer & Human Resource Assistant) and Dr Pauline Beattie (Operations Manager).

**Michael Makanga**  
**Director of South-South Cooperation and Head of Africa Office**

## Sixth EDCTP Forum

The Sixth EDCTP Forum (9 October to 12 October in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) will take place in just over 3 months. As one of the major conferences in Africa on the three poverty-related diseases of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, the Forum provides excellent possibilities to highlight key activities to a diverse audience of representatives from research institutions, universities, like-minded organisations, governments, regional bodies and industry.

### Sponsorships

EDCTP encourages its partners to get involved in the Forum and many have already confirmed their participation. For those not yet involved, there are many ways to join. EDCTP offers sponsors different opportunities to support the Sixth EDCTP Forum and to raise their profile during the event. To date, the following EDCTP Member States have confirmed their sponsorship: Belgium, Germany, Luxemburg, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Additionally, the third party partners, Aeras, Novartis and Shin Poong have confirmed their sponsorships to the Forum.

**Please visit the Sixth EDCTP Forum website ([www.edctpforum.org](http://www.edctpforum.org)) for more information on Sponsorship opportunities.**

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The EDCTP Newsletter is available in three languages namely English, French and Portuguese in electronic format on our website ([www.edctp.org](http://www.edctp.org)). Persons who wish to receive the electronic format should subscribe online ([www.edctp.org](http://www.edctp.org), click on Newsroom).



## Sixth EDCTP Forum (continued from page 1)

### Programme update

EDCTP and the Netherlands-African Partnership for Capacity Development and Clinical Interventions against Poverty-related Diseases (NACCAP) will organise a cross-cutting satellite meeting on Tuesday 11 October. This meeting will focus on capacity development and sharing experiences on strengthening capacity for health research and clinical trials. The objective of the satellite session is to formulate best practices for future approaches to capacity building.

Special sessions on scientific grant writing and scientific publication writing are some of the new additions enriching the programme.

These will be held in parallel the morning of Tuesday 11 October and Wednesday 12 October. The sessions are intended to develop the writing skills of all scientists interested in improving their skill sets in these areas. More information will soon be available on the forum website.

**For more information about the forum programme, please download the Programme at a Glance available at [www.edctpforum.org](http://www.edctpforum.org).**

### Photo contest

EDCTP organises a photo contest for all EDCTP project participants. The deadline for submitting the photographs is 12 September

2011. The best pictures will be displayed during the Forum and at the end of the conference the winners will be recognised. The aim of the contest is to have EDCTP projects documented by the participants themselves and in compliance with local ethical requirements of study patients' and volunteers' confidentiality and rights. EDCTP is confident that the quality of the photo collection will warrant its subsequent use for publicity and advocacy purposes.

**More information about the contest will be published at [www.edctpforum.org](http://www.edctpforum.org) by 1 August 2011.**

## EDCTP Governance

### New staff members



**Nancy Kensmil**  
Administration Officer & Human Resource Assistant

Nancy Kensmil was born in Surinam and grew up in the United States and Belgium. After completing her secondary education in Surinam she attended Leiden University in the Netherlands. She acquired Master's degrees in Labour and Organizational Psychology, and English Language and Literature,

specializing in American Studies. After graduation she worked in executive recruitment, market research and (software) translation. Prior to joining EDCTP, she worked in the field of recruitment and staffing at Randstad Netherlands as a Staffing Consultant for four years. She joined EDCTP in May 2011 as Administration Officer, a position in which she is responsible for administrative, operational, specific human resource and personnel related tasks.



**Pauline Beattie**  
Operations Manager

Dr Pauline Beattie (United Kingdom) will join the EDCTP management team as head of the Calls & Grants department effective from 1 August 2011. After completing her DPhil degree at Oxford University with research on 'TNF induction by *Plasmodium falciparum*' in 1997, she worked for the Wellcome Trust. As science portfolio manager she gained extensive experience managing the funding,

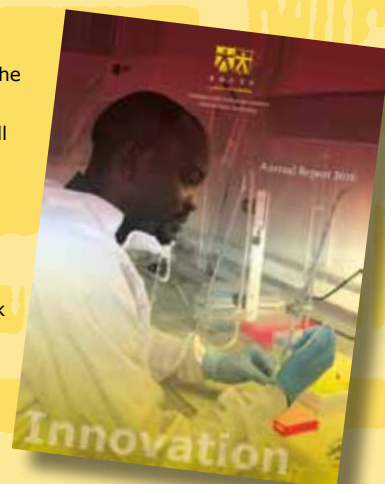
review and evaluation processes for research grants. As scientific secretary of several funding committees, she was responsible for the management and oversight of the grant application process. She also has extensive experience of organising funding committee meetings and of managing the peer review process. One of her achievements is having set up the operations for the Global Health Trials Initiative, a funding partnership between Wellcome Trust, the UK Medical Research Council and the UK Department for International Development. The primary responsibility of the Operations Manager is to oversee the administrative process for EDCTP's core business, the funding of clinical trials.

### General Assembly approves new calls

The General Assembly (GA), EDCTP's governing body, convened twice this quarter. On 8 April an extra-ordinary meeting was held and focussed discussions on the renewal of the EDCTP programme. In a regular meeting held on 13 May, the GA among other deliberations approved the Annual Report and three new Calls for proposals: calls for Senior Fellowships, a call for proposals to establish and strengthen of National Ethics Committees and Institutional Review Boards and a call for support of Member States Initiated (MSI) Projects within the scope of EDCTP activity areas.

### Launch of Annual Report 2010

The complete Annual Report 2010 is available in English, French and Portuguese on the website and for the first time also offers an interactive version. It contains a summary of all EDCTP funded projects from the inception of the programme in 2003 up to December 2010. Almost all photographs included in this report depict actual EDCTP projects activities. EDCTP would like to thank all collaborators who contributed photographs from the field.



## Calls and grants

### Upcoming calls for proposals

The following calls for proposals will be launched in August 2011 and published on [www.edctp.org](http://www.edctp.org):

#### Call: Senior Fellowships

Through this call, EDCTP intends to identify and support senior researchers capable of building and leading research groups at sub-Saharan African institutions that will be internationally competitive and capable of winning grants from international funding bodies. This grant is both available for researchers already working in Africa as well as those looking to return to the continent.

#### Call: Support of Member States Initiated (MSI) Projects within the scope of EDCTP activity areas

The purpose of this grant is to provide funding for networking and cooperation between two or more projects/programmes within the scope of the EDCTP that have been independently initiated and/or are funded separately by Member States. These proposed MSI project must clearly

demonstrate the added value and expected outcome of the networking and cooperation of the existing projects or programmes.

#### Call: Establishment and strengthening of African National Ethics Committees (NECs) and Institutional Review Boards (IRBs)

EDCTP wishes to promote the establishment and strengthening of National Ethics Committees (NEC) and Institutional Review Boards (IRB) that are competent and independent. The NECs and the IRBs are encouraged to establish themselves administratively and financially so as to ensure sustained and independent function beyond EDCTP funding. The objective is to make NECs or IRBs operational and to support their ongoing functions. Networking and training is encouraged and supported. Additional support in the form of online literature access, documentation, access to websites on ethics and GCP will be facilitated.

### Funded projects

EDCTP is pleased to announce that it has reached agreement on funding 22 new projects.

Eight new Senior Fellowships have been granted to the amount of approximately € 200,000 each. The research involved regards: malaria (4); HIV (2); HIV and malaria (1); HIV and tuberculosis co-infection (1).

In relation to the call for proposals to establish and strengthen National Ethics Committees or Institutional Review Boards funding for 14 projects was granted to the amount of around € 45,000 each.

A grant agreement for an amount of € 3,774,390 was signed for the REMSTART trial, a randomised trial to study possible reduction of mortality among HIV-infected persons starting antiretroviral therapy. The project is coordinated by Dr Said Egwaga, hosted by the Tanzanian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the sponsor is WHO/TDR (Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases).

## Focus on Ethics

### KEMRI: ethics review and monitoring of research

Over the past decade, there has been a consistent rise in biomedical and behavioural research conducted at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) and Kenya in general. This research profile mainly involves the development of new drugs and vaccines and has contributed to improving the public health structures in the country. Local independent monitoring of the research however has been sporadic, mainly comprising of clinical trials monitors from outside Kenya. Despite the complexity and nature of the research being conducted, the protection of the rights and welfare of research participants and of data integrity remains a national priority.

This project led by Dr Christine Wasunna aimed to build capacity for independent ethics review and monitoring of KEMRI-approved studies and to improve research oversight. This project is being implemented by KEMRI in partnership with the Expert Committee on Clinical Trials of the Pharmacy and Poisons Boards (PPB ECCT). The project plans to enhance the adoption of internationally accepted ethics review

standards at KEMRI and to provide a framework for auditing research approved by the KEMRI ERC (Ethics Research Committee) and PPB ECCT.

The ERC members and selected participants have undertaken several training courses in Good Clinical Practice/Good Clinical Laboratory Practice (GCP/GCLP), clinical research monitoring and targeted training on ethics in social and behavioural science research.

With financial support from EDCTP, KEMRI and PPB are currently developing a national registry for clinical trials in order to effectively regulate approval and monitoring of all clinical trials taking place in the Kenya. The registry is to be based at the Pharmacy and Poisons Board. A trial version of the registry has been developed. This project will be completed in December 2011 with a sustainability strategy in place to carry on these activities in the future.



Trainees at the GCP/GCLP course

## Focus on Projects

### EARNEST: trial leading the field in optimising second-line HIV therapy

**The Europe-Africa Research Network for Evaluation of Second-line Therapy (EARNEST) is the world's largest registered trial investigating the best treatment options for individuals whose first combination of anti-HIV medicines is no longer working. The main objective of the trial is to find out whether raltegravir (licensed for HIV treatment in Western countries) can be introduced in African HIV treatment programmes in combination with a standard anti-HIV medicine called Aluvia (lopinavir/ritonavir). The EARNEST Trial is funded by EDCTP.**

After only one year of recruitment, the trial reached its ambitious target of enrolling 1200 HIV-positive individuals on 29 April 2010. The 1200 participants were enrolled at 14 sites in 5 African countries, namely Uganda, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Kenya and Zambia. The trial is conducted in partnership with the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Belgium, the Istituto Superiore di Sanità and CINECA in Italy, the Hospital La Paz in Spain, the University College Dublin in Ireland and the UK Medical Research Council which is

also the sponsor of the trial. The medicines for the trial have been donated free of charge by pharmaceutical companies including Merck and Abbott.

All participants have been started on their second combination of anti-HIV medicines and the focus of the trial is now on collecting data on the health of the participants as well as information about their quality of life, social functioning and financial status. The trial is anticipated to be completed in early 2014. The findings will inform future international HIV treatment guidelines of the World Health Organisation.

The trial also provides important opportunities for training and networking in Africa. The EARNEST investigators meet regularly to exchange experiences and discuss issues, particularly those concerning second-line therapy. Experienced staff from Africa and Europe has regular exchange visits to provide training and mentorship, and several staff have been enrolled on PhD programmes and international courses in clinical trials.

### Nigeria: training laypersons to review research protocols

As internationally recommended, in Nigeria all ethics committees are supposed to have at least one lay member. These lay persons are expected not only to address the rights of research participants but also the peculiar needs of their communities. As many of them have no training to engage with the research process, they find it difficult to constructively fulfill their role of research gatekeepers for their community.

The New HIV Vaccine and Microbicide Advocacy Society (NHVMAS) therefore piloted a novel programme to train laypersons that are on Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). This project led by Dr Morenike Oluwatoyin Ukpong was the first ever such effort in the country and is part of a systematic capacity building effort for members of IRBs in Nigeria. This EDCTP funded project was successfully completed in January 2011.

The project provided a five-day workshop for laypersons on "Protocol review and constructive feedback". The training engaged participants in plenary discussions,



**Project Coordinator Dr Morenike Ukpong conducting training with participants in Ibadan, Nigeria**

presentations, group discussions, case studies, and "question and answer" sessions. Through pre- and post-training assessment of the knowledge of the trainees it could be shown that i) the trainees made use of the acquired skills and knowledge; (ii) the ethics committees function improved as a result of the training; (iii) the knowledge of other ethics committee members who did not attend the training also improved (compared to an ethics committee where none of the members attended the training). The training manual was printed and distributed. The

electronic version of this manual can be accessed at [www.edctp.org](http://www.edctp.org) under publications.

In 2010, two collaborators on this project received EDCTP grants to build on the baseline effort of NHVMAS. These grantees will be involved with IRBs which NHVMAS already worked with. As a further result of the project two new ethics committees were registered with the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) in line with national regulations.

## Focus on Projects (continued from page 4)

### EACCR network of excellence: the second year experience



Delegates of EACCR during the second Annual Meeting in Moshi, Tanzania

The East African Consortium for Clinical Research (EACCR) convened its second Annual Meeting at the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC) in Moshi, Tanzania on 18 and 19 April 2011. The meeting was attended by 87 regional participants, including 2 EDCTP-funded Senior Fellows, some Masters degree fellows at KCMC and other participants from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and other institutions in Tanzania.

EACCR is the East-African network of excellence funded by EDCTP. Its aim is to strengthen the capacity to conduct clinical trials and other health research on malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. The consortium currently focuses on research management, training, mentorship and infrastructure upgrade.

Thirty-four institutions in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda are involved in the consortium. Its European partner institutions are in Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The Secretariat is located at the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) providing support to the four coordinating nodes for training (KCMC, Tanzania), malaria (KEMRI-Kilifi, Kenya),

tuberculosis (NIMR-Muhimbili, Tanzania) and HIV (UVRI, Uganda).

EACCR secured 4 EDCTP Senior Fellowships and is supporting over 20 Masters degree fellows mostly in regional universities and long distance courses in the United Kingdom. In the first year of operation the consortium conducted several short courses in disease-specific techniques, clinical trial monitoring, epidemiology and biostatistics. CANTAM (Central Africa Network on Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and Malaria for the conduct of clinical trials), a sister network, had five participants attending an intensive course in epidemiology and biostatistics at UVRI in September 2010. Additionally, KEMRI-CDC in Kisumu provided one training attachment on HIV and malaria co-infection in paediatrics to a CANTAM scientist in April 2011.

The network will provide a career platform for scientists trained in and outside of the EDCTP programme. For example in June 2011, three scientists who graduated with PhDs from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (University of London, UK) returned to their institutions within EACCR.

#### Dr Jessica Nakiyingi-Miiro, MRC/UVRI Research Unit on AIDS (Uganda)



## Meetings and visits

### EDCTP visit to Sierra Leone

Presently, Sierra Leone is one of the African countries with no EDCTP funded activities. On 23 June 2011, the EDCTP High Representative, Dr Pascoal Mocumbi, and Director South-South Cooperation and Head of Africa Office, Dr Michael Makanga, visited Sierra Leone and held meetings with the Minister of Health and Sanitation, Honourable Zainab Hawa Bangura; Deputy Minister, Mr Borbor Sawyer; and senior ministry of health officials responsible for research and policy issues involving HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

An additional meeting was held on the same day with the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports (also responsible for Science and Technology), Honourable Minkailu Bah; Deputy Ministers of Education, Youth and Sport, Dr Algasimu Jah and Dr Lansana Nyallay and; Permanent Secretary, Mr A.R. Bayoh; and other senior officials involved in health research training.

This was partly an advocacy visit and the meetings were strategically aimed at exploring practical ways of engaging Sierra Leone researchers in future EDCTP supported activities.



From left to right: Hon Dr Lansana Nyallay, Deputy Minister of Education, Youth and Sports; Hon Dr Algasimu Jah, Deputy Minister of Education, Youth and Sports; Hon Dr Minkailu Bah, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports; Dr Michael Makanga; Mr A.R. Bayoh, Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; and Dr Alhaji Mohamed Kamara Duputy Chief Education Officer

## EDCTP site visit to Malawi

The EDCTP site visit to Malawi was conducted from 15 to 19 March 2011. The visit included a high level meeting with honourable Professor David Mphande, Minister of Health and Dr Felicitas Zawaira, WHO Country Representative, and targeted EDCTP funded projects. The latter involved the College of Medicine (CoM) of the University of Malawi in Blantyre and its peripheral research health centres in Mangochi and Chikwawa. The CoM is the focal institution for the nine EDCTP funded projects with majority of the utilising the laboratories of the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, a teaching facility.

Research management at CoM is centralised and coordinated by a Research Support Centre. This set up clearly contributes to the success observed here and is a model to be emulated by other African institutions. The excellent collaboration and sharing of resources among researchers has minimised redundancy and enhanced utilisation of capacity developed.



**Mothers enrolling their children in EDCTP funded clinical trial at Ndirande Health Centre.**

Equally good collaboration exists between the College research affiliates of northern institutions, especially with the Malawi-Liverpool-Wellcome Trust which shares laboratory infrastructure and complements the training requirements of the College. The same applies to the John Hopkins Research Programme facilities that are part of the EDCTP funded Trials of Excellence in Southern Africa (TESA) network of excellence.

The site visit team consisted of Dr Pascoal Mocumbi (High Representative), Professor Nkandu Luo (HIV expert for South Africa on the Developing Countries Coordination Committee) and Dr Thomas Nyirenda (South-South Networking and Capacity Development Manager).

## Fourth Malaria in Pregnancy (MiP) Consortium Annual Meeting in Maputo



**Participants at the Fourth Malaria in Pregnancy Consortium meeting in Maputo, Mozambique**

See also: [www.mip-consortium.org](http://www.mip-consortium.org) and [www.manhica.org](http://www.manhica.org)

The fourth annual meeting of the Malaria in Pregnancy (MiP) Consortium was held in Maputo, Mozambique, 1-3 June 2011, co-funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and EDCTP and hosted by the Manhica Health Research Centre (CISM). It was attended by 66 participants including the senior investigators from 14 major research projects and stakeholders from WHO and other international health and non-governmental agencies. Dr Pascoal Mocumbi, EDCTP High Representative and President of the Manhica Foundation, represented EDCTP.

The meeting was dedicated to the progress of the MiP Consortium's multicentre clinical trials in Africa, Asia and Latin America to find new drugs and strategies for the prevention and treatment of malaria in pregnancy and other crucial cross cutting activities, such as immunology, drug safety, public health impact and capacity development.

A field trip to the CISM research centre in Manhica concluded the conference. CISM is one of five study sites involved in a multicentre trial to evaluate the safety and efficacy of antimalarials alternative to sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine for the intermittent prevention of malaria in pregnancy. The context for the trial consists of different malaria endemic settings with moderate to high SP resistance in Africa where insecticide treated nets are in use. It is also involved in an innovative MiP Consortium multicentre study to develop and field test active surveillance tools and procedures to identify and assess during early pregnancy exposure to artemisinin combination therapy.

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