

Abstract

BACKGROUND:

European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) was founded in 2003 by the European Parliament and Council. It is a partnership of 14 European Union (EU) member states, Norway, Switzerland, and Developing Countries, formed to fund acceleration of new clinical trial interventions to fight the human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), malaria and tuberculosis (TB) in the sub-Saharan African region. EDCTP seeks to be synergistic with other funding bodies supporting research on these diseases.

METHODS:

EDCTP promotes collaborative research supported by multiple funding agencies and harnesses networking expertise across different African and European countries. EDCTP is different from other similar initiatives. The organisation of EDCTP blends important aspects of partnership that includes ownership, sustainability and responds to demand-driven research. The Developing Countries Coordinating Committee (DCCC); a team of independent scientists and representatives of regional health bodies from sub-Saharan Africa provides advice to the partnership. Thus EDCTP reflects a true partnership and the active involvement and contribution of these African scientists ensures joint ownership of the EDCTP programme with European counterparts.

RESULTS:

The following have been the major achievements of the EDCTP initiative since its formation in 2003; i) increase in the number of participating African countries from two to 26 in 2008 ii) the cumulative amount of funds spent on EDCTP projects has reached 150 m euros, iii) the cumulative number of clinical trials approved has reached 40 and iv) there has been a significant increase number and diversity in capacity building activities.

CONCLUSION:

While we recognise that EDCTP faced enormous challenges in its first few years of existence, the strong involvement of African scientists and its new initiatives such as unconditional funding to regional networks of excellence in sub-Saharan Africa is envisaged to lead to a sustainable programme. Current data shows that the number of projects supported by EDCTP is increasing. DCCC proposes that this success story of true partnership should be used as model by partners involved in the fight against other infectious diseases of public health importance in the region.