



Research to Stop the Transmission of NTDs (R2STOP): Policy for Supporting Scientific Research

Background/Context:

The R2STOP Initiative was founded by effect: hope to support research aimed at closing gaps in our understanding of transmission of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs). R2STOP's research agenda, will address intractable questions that will enable the effective interruption of the transmission of NTDs and make progress towards the elimination, eradication and control goals of the London Declaration¹ and WHO roadmap for Neglected Tropical Disease (NTDs)².

Vision Statement:

Increased knowledge of transmission in Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in order to improve strategies for the prevention of their transmission.

Objectives:

1. Establish, and amend as needed, an agenda aimed at bridging the gaps in our understanding of NTD transmission that will complement a global research strategy focused on eliminating, eradicating and controlling NTDs.
2. Facilitate the development of research proposals from all sectors of the research community, in any aspect of transmission commensurate with the R2STOP's Research Policy.
3. Provide an efficient, transparent and scientifically rigorous selection process of research projects according to priorities set in R2STOP'S Research Policy.
4. To provide a high-quality, scientific monitoring mechanism of research project(s) supported by R2STOP.
5. To develop a platform to encourage collaboration and opportunities for the sharing and translation of knowledge among research grantees.

¹ United to Combat NTDs (2012) London declaration on neglected tropical diseases.
http://unitingtocombatntds.org/downloads/press/ntd_event_london_declaration_on_ntds.pdf. Accessed 2015 February 28

² World Health Organisation (2012) Accelerating work to overcome the global impact of neglected tropical diseases: a roadmap for implementation. Geneva: World Health Organisation.
http://www.who.int/neglected_diseases/NTD_RoadMap_2012_Fullversion.pdf. Accessed 2015 February 28



R2STOP Research Call - Round 1 - Leprosy

Strategic Funding Priorities:

In order to identify critical gaps in knowledge related to transmission and to set priorities for R2STOP, effect:hope commissioned an independent literature review entitled “Systematic Literature Review on Current Knowledge Regarding the Transmission of Leprosy”³ and in partnership with the Baylor College of Medicine, National School of Tropical Medicine, convened a scientific meeting of partners, including infectious disease researchers, clinicians, public health experts and social scientists to discuss gaps in our understanding of *M. leprae* transmission. The outcome of both activities has informed a research agenda identifying critical areas related to increasing our understanding of *M. leprae* transmission with the heightened potential of improving strategies for blocking transmission.

The initial priority funding areas of R2STOP will include:

1. Human-to-human transmission (human reservoirs)

- a. Areas of interest include: 1) the discovery of biomarkers for all clinical and subclinical cases of leprosy as well as biomarkers for asymptomatic carriers; 2) assessing the role of colonization and route of entry of *M. leprae* into the human host; 3) investigating potential roles of co-infections on the entry/exit of *M. leprae* from the human host; 4) studying the stages of pathogenicity of *M. leprae* to understand the migration (port of entry to the site of initial lesion to point of exit) of *M. leprae* inside the human host.

2. Non-human Reservoirs

- a. Areas of interest include: 1) distribution of *M. leprae* infection in armadillos in the Americas and potential zoonoses; 2) investigate the role of other animals in *M. leprae* transmission; 3) Investigate the biological relationship between *M. leprae* and amoeba; 4) investigate the presence of *M. leprae* in the environment in different endemic settings; 5) use genotyping to understand the role of *M. leprae* found in the environment and those *M. leprae* strains found in the population; 6) demonstrate viability of *M. leprae* in the environment.

3. Host-Pathogen Interactions

- a. Areas of interest include, 1) defining relationships between *M. leprae* genetic characteristic and virulence, growth kinetics, drug resistance, tropisms for nerves and the tendency to cause reactions; 2) defining the role of host genetic risk factors in susceptibility and resistance to *M. leprae* infection, clinical progression of leprosy and reactions; 3) understanding how the immune response affects the various manifestations of leprosy to include: establishing infection, progression of disease,

³ The “Systematic Literature Review on Current Knowledge Regarding the Transmission of Leprosy” is available at www.effecthope.org



Research to **STOP** neglected tropical disease transmission.

nasal carriage and reactions; 4) increasing our understanding of the similarities/differences between *M. leprae* and *M. lepromatosis*.

4. Transmission Networks

- a. Areas on interest include: 1) increased collection of genome sequenced *M. leprae* strains with isolates from various origins (e.g., worldwide, paucibacillary cases) complemented with detailed epidemiological data; 2) investigation of genetic diversity of *M. leprae* from different sources (e.g., patients, nasal carriers, zoonotic and environmental) and various settings (e.g., high and low endemic regions) to understand the transmission ecology at the community level.

Funding Details:

Funding grants for research projects will range for \$10,000 to \$100,000 annually for a maximum duration of 3 years. Researchers wishing to extend their research will be requested to submit a request for renewal in the final year of their research project. Active grant management will be the responsibility of the R2STOP Management Committee.

R2STOP will disperse funds through a Call for Proposal funding mechanism which will be announced on the R2STOP website.

Application and Review Process:

1. Eligible applicants will first submit a Letter of Intent (LOIs) to the R2STOP Scientific Review Committee (SRC) who will assess them in accordance with the R2STOP Research Policy.
2. Only those applicants who have a successful LOI submission will be invited to submit a Full Research Proposal Application.
3. The Full Research Proposal Application will then be reviewed by selected members of an Expert Review Panel (ERP), who are experts in the specific Research Proposal subject matter.
4. The selected group of research experts will then make funding recommendations to the Scientific Review Committee (SRC) based on their review process, and the SRC will ask for any additional information from applicants as needed.
5. The SRC will then award the research grants.

Ethical Approval:

It is expected that all research projects submitted and funded by R2STOP will have received ethical approval from the relevant national and institutional research bodies as per their specific requirements. This is mandatory and not limited to studies or research projects involving clinical trials and requiring animal welfare considerations.



Research Funding Agreement:

Each Research grantee will be required to sign a Research Funding Agreement which highlights the financial contribution of R2STOP and any other funders, the schedule for grant disbursement and the schedule for reports.

Amendment:

This Agreement can be amended as needed with the concurrence of the authorized representatives of the partners listed below. All proposals for amendments should be made in writing and should be recorded as addenda to this document.

Force Majeure and Termination:

(a) Neither party shall be liable for any unforeseeable event beyond its reasonable control and not caused by the fault or negligence of such Party, which causes such Party to be unable to perform its obligations under the Project (and which it has been unable to overcome by the exercise of due diligence), including but not limited to, flood, drought, earthquake, storm, fire, pestilence, and other natural catastrophes, epidemic, war, riot, civil disturbance or disobedience, strikes, labor disputes, or failure, threat of failure, or sabotage of any facilities or equipment used in conjunction with the Project or any order or injunction made by a court or public agency of competent jurisdiction.

(b) If a force majeure event occurs, the Party unable to perform shall notify the other Party promptly and shall use its reasonable efforts to resume performance as quickly as possible and shall suspend performance only for as long as is necessary due to the force majeure event.

(c) The Project may be terminated by provision of three (3) months written notice for cause, at any time, in whole or in part, upon written notification to the lead implementing partner, whenever it is determined that the lead implementing partner has failed to comply with the terms and conditions of this the Project.

(d) The Project may be terminated by provision of three (3) months written notice for convenience at any time by either party, in whole or in part, if Parties agree that the continuation of the Project would not produce beneficial results commensurate with the further expenditure of funds.

For more information, please e-mail info@r2stop.org.