

Major pharmaceutical group calls for NCD research in sub-Saharan Africa

GlaxoSmithKline launched the first call for proposals for its Africa NCD Open Lab on 14 November. The call is to support much-needed scientific research into non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Africa. Up to £4m will be available in this first funding round, to support successful proposals from researchers in Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Ghana, The Gambia, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Malawi.



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The Africa NCD Open Lab was established by GSK earlier this year, with a commitment of £25 million funding over five years, as part of a series of strategic investments in sub-Saharan Africa. In this region, and across developing countries, NCDs, such as cancer and diabetes, are becoming more prevalent and people need to learn more about how - and why - these diseases manifest differently in this setting.

The Africa NCD Open Lab aims to address this through the creation of an innovative research network that will see GSK scientists collaborate with researchers across Africa on high quality epidemiological, genetic and interventional research, from its R&D facility in the UK. The aim is to research interventions for the prevention and treatment of five priority diseases - cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic kidney disease and chronic respiratory disease - while helping build local expertise and creating a new generation of African NCD experts.

This builds on the success of its Open Lab in Tres Cantos, Spain that provides independent researchers access to facilities, resources and knowledge to help them advance their own research projects into diseases of the developing world such as malaria, tuberculosis and leishmaniasis. Since the Tres Cantos Open Lab was established, 15 projects from world-class institutions have been completed, progressing much needed research into diseases of the developing world.

An independent external advisory group, comprising clinical and scientific experts in the field of NCDs, will review applications to the NCD Open Lab, with recommendations for funding based on scientific merit. The group will consist of a majority African membership to ensure that only locally-relevant research is funded.

New call for South Africa in 2015

A second call for proposals in South Africa is planned for early in 2015, which will be launched in collaboration with the Medical Research Councils of South Africa and the UK, with a combined £5 million funding.

Dr Mike Strange, Interim Head of the Africa NCD Open Lab, said, "We believe the collaborative research network we're creating through the Africa NCD Open Lab has the potential to improve understanding of NCDs in Africa - and could ultimately accelerate the development of new, better medicines to treat these. "The launch of our first call for proposals is an important milestone for this initiative and we encourage researchers working in the field of NCDs who are based in the eligible countries to consider applying for the funding and expert support available to them through this."

For more information, go to www.gsk.com/africa-ncd-openlab.

