

International team to investigate second-line HIV therapy in Africa

May 18 2011



The largest clinical trial to investigate treatment options for individuals whose first combination of anti-HIV medicines is no longer working has been announced following the recruitment of 1,200 HIV-positive individuals from across five African countries.

University College Dublin is part of the international team of experts coordinating the Europe-Africa Research Network for Evaluation of Second-line Therapy, EARNEST.

As part of the study, participants whose first combination of anti-HIV medicines is no longer working will be treated with a new anti-HIV medicine called raltegravir (licensed for [HIV treatment](#) in [Western](#)

[countries](#)) in combination with a standard HIV medicine.

The research will track the influence of the treatment on the individual's health, quality of life, social functioning and financial status over three years.

The international team includes experts from the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Belgium, the Istituto Superiore di Sanita and CINECA in Italy, the Hospital La Paz in Spain, and the UK Medical Research Council.

The study is funded by the European Union, and the medicines for the trial have been donated by pharmaceutical companies including Merck and Abbott.

The University College Dublin contribution to the international study is lead by Patrick Paul Walsh, Professor of International Development at the UCD School of Politics and International Relations; and Dr. Patrick Mallon from the UCD School of Medicine (Infectious Diseases) and the Mater Hospital.

“As part of the study, for the first time, researchers will track the benefits of keeping HIV-positive individuals well over time in terms of the socio-economic impact on their extended family,” says Professor Walsh.

“Through the UCD Ph.D. in Global Human Development we will train three staff from clinical sites in the University of Malawi and the University of Zimbabwe in [Clinical Trials](#) and Bio-Statistics,” adds Dr Mallon.

The 1,200 EARNEST participants were enrolled at 14 sites across five [African countries](#): Uganda, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Kenya and Zambia.

The trial will provide final results in early 2014. The findings of this African trial will inform future international HIV treatment guidelines such as those of the World Health Organization.

Provided by University College Dublin

Citation: International team to investigate second-line HIV therapy in Africa (2011, May 18) retrieved 30 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-05-international-team-second-line-hiv-therapy.html>

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