



T-REC Zimbabwe - Launch Meeting Holiday Inn Hotel, Harare, Zimbabwe 5th October 2011



Back row from right: Tonderai Mapako, David Mvere, Shirley Owusu-Ofori, Collins Timire, Radhi Chikwereti
Front row from right: Justina Ansah, Exnavia Gomo, Imelda Bates, Rene van Hulst

Introduction

The launch for T-REC was held on the 5th of October at Holiday Inn, Harare under the theme “**Building Research Capacity of Blood Transfusion Services in Africa**”. Various stakeholders were invited and these were members from the Academia (UZ College of Health Sciences), Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe (MRCZ), research partners such as the Biomedical Research and Training Institute (BRTI) and the Research Council of Zimbabwe, the members of the Medical Scientific Committee which is a subcommittee of the NBSZ National Committee, NBSZ management team and the T-REC project team. The event was graced by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare; Brigadier General (Dr) Gerald Gwinji who officially opened the T-REC programme in Zimbabwe amid jubilation from the delegates.

Opening Ceremony

In his opening remarks, Mr. Mvere, the Secretary General of the Africa Society for Blood Transfusion (AfSBT) and also the Chief Executive Officer of the National Blood Service Zimbabwe (NBSZ) welcomed the invited guests to the launch of the T-Rec project. He chronicled the path that was taken to come up with the T-REC programme following the recommendations of the 2008 Mombasa

meeting that was initiated by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), with the support of the Wellcome Trust and hosted by the AfSBT. He highlighted that the Mombasa meeting was necessitated by the strong urge to find ways of coming up with evidence based policies in transfusion service delivery in Africa after having realised that there was a dearth of researches in this area. Lack of research has created a knowledge gap and dependence on outputs of research work from Western countries by policy makers. The Mombasa meeting was aimed at finding possible ways of addressing this challenge. The output was the identification of research priority areas for blood transfusion services in the Africa Region. LSTM personified by Dr. Imelda Bates took on the challenge and sourced support from the EU project funds for research and this led to the birth of the T-REC project. The launch of the T-REC project is a significant milestone in as far as the pursuit of building research capacity in Africa is concerned.

Currently Zimbabwe and Ghana are the African countries that are participating in the programme. Zimbabwe was mandated through its relationship with AfSBT to coordinating and promoting the dissemination of all research work done under this project and through this, encouraging and facilitating research work in the member countries and its membership. As part of its role in the project the NBSZ is responsible for the PhD programme in particular coordinating the activities of the two PhD students recruited in Ghana and Zimbabwe and the respective faculties to which they have enrolled for the studies. The PhD programme is a clear demonstration of South –North academic cooperation and will also see a strengthening of the capacity of African and European Universities to supervise researchers in Blood Transfusion in the Africa Region.

AfSBT and Research Priorities

During the T-REC Programme AfSBT will promote, research through dissemination of research papers using various media and forums. The AfSBT website and biennial congresses prove to be the ideal platforms for achieving this. The 6th biennial congress of the AfSBT is going to be held from June 4-8 next year in Mauritius. It is envisaged that T-REC will host a parallel session to disseminate its findings. The Research Coordinator for the AfSBT Mr. Tonderai Mapako gave an overview of the AfSBT, its mission and its aims .He also spoke on the research priority areas that were identified at the Mombasa meeting in Kenya and the need for all researchers to acquaint themselves with these so that they can be guided accordingly. All of the delegates were encouraged to pay regular visits to the society's website www.afsbt.org in order for them to keep abreast with what will be happening.

Project Objectives

Dr Imelda Bates (LSTM) stressed the need to strengthen research capacity in Africa in order to generate information that helps shape policies and practices in blood transfusion service delivery. This is critical in order to generate evidence for development or review of local policies rather than relying on research evidence from outside Africa to influence policy in African blood transfusion centres. Of late African institutions were extrapolating so to speak, results/findings from European or American researches leading to misdirected policies. The need for home grown solutions cannot be over emphasized. The outcome of the Mombasa meeting was noted, and Dr Bates was quick to highlight that there was need to increase research capacity through the various work packages (WP) such as WP2 4 PhD fellowships, WP3 42 in service Diploma in Project Design and Management courses (DPDM) that are accredited to LSTM and WP4 in which 60 student bursaries are to be rolled out.

The success of the project is hinged on the establishment of mutually beneficial relationships between Ministries of Health (policy makers), academic institutions, blood transfusion services and research and training institutions. This will also go a long way in supporting research use and establishment of a proper interface between research findings and policy formulation in Africa. The role of educational institutions is to facilitate and strengthen teaching on blood transfusion and to provide supervisory support. These sentiments were also echoed by the Dean of the UZ College of Health Sciences Prof M. Chidzonga who implored academia in various departments of the UZ-CHS to provide support to the T-REC project in the form of supervision. He alluded to the fact that the project was a beneficial platform for Zimbabwean scientists and their counterparts in Africa and beyond African borders.

Regulation of Research in Zimbabwe

A representative from the Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe was given the platform to explain the regulatory framework within Zimbabwe and the minimum requirements expected from prospective researchers who intend to carry out their researches in Zimbabwe.

Research policy was explained and the rationale behind coming up with the MRCZ, a watch dog that protects research study participants taking into consideration past examples of atrocities that were perpetrated on study participants in the name of research.

Challenges and relevant expertise of the NBSZ

Mr. Mvere indicated that the Service has a centralized testing system for TTIs and this has advantages in that it: enables optimal and cost effective use of resources (reagents and automated equipment), standardizes quality of testing as all blood products undergo the same level of testing, enables optimal use of qualified staff to do the testing and data management. He also highlighted challenges that are being faced by NBSZ such as lack of both proper inventory management system, lack of feedback from hospitals on stock usage and challenges to do with infections such as HCV, HBV and malaria that compromise blood safety.

Official launch of the T-REC project

The guest of honour; the Permanent Secretary in the MoH & CW lauded the noble initiative taken by all consortium partners in an endeavour to come up with solutions to challenges in blood transfusion service delivery. All researchers were challenged to identify research areas that are in line with the research priority areas. He then proceeded to officially open the T-REC project in Zimbabwe amid jubilation from the delegates.



Launch Programme

Time	Activity	Facilitator
0830 – 09h00	Arrival of guests and registration	National Blood Service Zimbabwe
09h00 – 09h20	Welcome & Opening Remarks	Secretary General; Africa Society for Blood Transfusion – Mr David Mvere
09h20 – 09h30	AfSBT & Research Priorities	Research Coordinator; Africa Society for Blood Transfusion – Mr T Mapako
09h30 – 09h40	Project Objectives	Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine – Dr Imelda Bates
09h40 – 09h50	The Academic Perspective	UZ Dean College of Health Sciences - Professor Midion Chidzonga -
09h50 – 10h00	The Academic Perspective	University of Groningen – Dr R Van Hulst
10h00 – 10h10	Medical Research in Zimbabwe	Chairman Medical Research Council – Ms G N Mahlangu
10h10 – 10h25	Official Launch of the T-REC Project in Zimbabwe	Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health & Child Welfare – Brigadier General (Dr) Gerald Gwinji
10h25 – 10h40	MEDIA QUESTION & ANSWER	ALL
10h40 – 11h00	Tea/Coffee Break	ALL
11h00 – 11h20	Relevant Expertise	Ghana Blood Transfusion Services – Dr Shirley Owusu
11h20 – 11h40	Relevant Expertise	National Blood Service Zimbabwe – Mr David Mvere
11h40 – 12h00	Relevant Expertise	University of Zimbabwe Research Support Centre – Professor Exenevia Gomo
12h00 – 12h20	Relevant Expertise	University of Groningen - Dr Rene Van Hulst
12h20 – 12h40	Relevant Expertise	Africa Society for Blood Transfusion – Mr Tonderai Mapako
12h40 – 13h00	Discussions	ALL
Lunch For All Guests		



List of Participants

1. Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health & Child Welfare; Brigadier General (Dr.) G. Gwinji
2. Principal Director Curative Services MoHCW; Dr Christopher Tapfumaneyi
3. Ministry of Health & Child Welfare (4 representatives)
4. Director Health Policies WHO; Dr S Midzi
5. Public Health Specialist CDC; Mrs S Patel
6. Public Affairs/Communications CDC; Mrs P Mushati
7. Medical School Head of Research; Professor Gomo
8. Dean UZ College of Health Sciences; Professor M Chidzonga
9. College of Health Sciences; Professor Gwanzura
10. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Mr C Samkange
11. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Dr M Chirara
12. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Professor A Mandisodza
13. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Dr M F Bwakura-Dangarembizi
14. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Dr S Munjanja
15. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Dr T Magure
16. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Mr B Mudenge
17. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Dr P Moyo
18. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Dr J Pfumojena
19. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Dr M E Chitiyo
20. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Mr T Mapako
21. NBSZ Medical Scientific Committee; Mr .C Timire
22. NBSZ Chairman; Retd Justice G Smith
23. ZINQAP Board Chairman; Dr Mujaji
24. ZINQAP Director; Mrs S Zimuto
25. EU Public Health Advisor; Dr Paolo Barduagni
26. Director General- BRTI; Professor Peter Mason
27. Assistant Director General- BRTI; Ms Shungu Munyati
28. Head of Laboratory BRTI; Ms Junior Mutsvangwa
29. Coordinator Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe; Mrs Rutendo Gutsire
30. Chairperson Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe; Ms Mahlangu
31. Director General Medical Services ZDF; Dr Chimedza

GUEST LIST MEDIA

1. ZTV, The Herald, The Sunday Mail, The Standard
2. The Independent, the News Day and Health Matters

CORPORATE ORGANIZATIONS

1. Projects Manager Mbada Diamonds; Mrs Jean Makoni
2. Media Consultant Mbada Diamonds; Mr Ignatius Mazura