

Call for application for IMPROVE PhD grants

Overview

IMPROVE (Improving Pregnancy Outcomes with intermittent preVEntive treatment in Africa) is a Consortium of 11 partners in Africa, Europe and the US funded by the European Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) and Medical Research Council (MRC) to undertake a clinical trial to compare the efficacy, safety and tolerance of intermittent preventive treatment in pregnancy with Dihydroartemisinin. Dihydroartemisinin-Piperaquine (IPTp-DP), alone or combined with azithromycin (IPTp-DP-AZ), versus IPTp with standard sulfadoxine- pyrimethamine (IPT-SP) as control to reduce the adverse effects of malaria and curable sexually transmitted infections/reproductive tract infections (STIs/RTIs) in 4,680 women in 10 sites in high SP resistance areas of Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania. Additional nested ancillary studies on cardiac-safety; molecular markers of antimalarial resistance; antimicrobial activity of SP and AZ; and acceptability, feasibility and cost-effectiveness will also be conducted. Capacity building activities include PhD support for candidates associated with consortium partners in Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania.

Consortium Partners

Africa:

- University of Malawi, College of Medicine (CoM), Malawi; Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI), Kenya; National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR), Tanzania www.nimr.or.tz and Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC), Tanzania.

Europe:

- Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), United Kingdom; London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), United Kingdom; University of Copenhagen (UoC), Denmark; University College of London (UCL), United Kingdom; University of Bergen (UiB), Norway; University of Tampere (UoT), Finland.

USA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Atlanta, USA.

The National Institute for Medical Research in collaboration with the IMPROVE Consortium seeks applicants for a PhD studentship related to the topics below:-

- WP2: Assessment of foetal and post-natal growth alterations and poor birth outcomes due to malaria and Sexually Transmitted Infections/Respiratory Tract Infections in pregnancy in high sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine resistance areas in Kenya, Malawi, and Tanzania. Registration will be at the UoC, Denmark with NIMR being the host institution in Tanzania
- WP3: Assessment of sub-microscopic infections and molecular markers of parasite resistance. Registration will be at UoC, Denmark and KCMC being the host institution in Tanzania
- WP4: Assessment of antimicrobial activity and potential effect on drug resistance. Registration will be at the UoT, Finland, with CoM being the host institution in Malawi
- WP5: Feasibility and Economic studies. Registration will be at the UiB, with KEMRI being hosting institution in Kenya

Specific project descriptions and specific skills and requirement for the applicant

The aim of the WP2 PhD study is to investigate the impact of malaria and sexually transmitted/reproductive tract infections (STIs/RTIs) during pregnancy on foetal and postnatal growth and poor birth outcomes. Both the individual and the combined impact of malaria and STIs/RTIs will be investigated. The study cohort will be screened for malaria multiple times during pregnancy and for

syphilis at the first antenatal visit. A sub-group of women in Tanzania and Malawi will also be screened for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, trichomoniasis, and bacterial vaginosis.

Comprehensive anthropometric assessments of the newborn at the time of birth and six weeks post-partum will be done. The individual anthropometric measurements and the ratio between the different measurements will be used as indicators of alterations in foetal growth. Furthermore, serial ultrasound for foetal weight estimation will be performed 2-3 times during pregnancy for the sub-group in Malawi and Tanzania. Growth trajectories will be generated using foetal weights, birth weight and infants' weight six weeks post-partum.

The PhD candidate will be trained in obstetric ultrasound and will in collaboration with local and international colleagues lead the on-site quality control and performance of ultrasound in Tanzania. Together with local colleagues s/he will also lead in the monitoring of serial ultrasound in Malawi. The PhD candidate will be based in Korogwe, Tanzania but will utilize data from all trial sites.

Minimal requirements for the WP2 PhD studentship in addition to the criteria stated below:

- 1) Educational background within Medicine or Nursing.
- 2) Master degree within health sciences (e.g. epidemiology, public health, international health, reproductive health).
- 3) Willingness to reside in the study site for the entire study duration.
- 4) Willingness to travel to trial sites in Kenya and Malawi for longer or shorter time periods, if necessary.
- 5) Willingness to travel to Denmark for PhD course related works, when necessary.

Of advantage for the applicant when applying:

- 1) Work experience from clinical trials in any population.
- 2) Work experience from clinical trials and/or research project involving pregnant women or women of the reproductive age.
- 3) Experience with ultrasound, preferably Obstetric ultrasound.
- 4) Experience with working within the Tanzania governmental health sector either clinically or as a researcher.

Financing terms and PhD Programme

The following will be included:

- PhD stipend for the duration of the award in accordance with rules and regulations of the hosting and registering institution.
- Cost of a training attachment at a European partner institution.
- Centralized training on research methods, Good Clinical and Laboratory Practice, obstetric ultrasound and dissemination skills
- A Personal Development Programme and Mentoring

Selection procedure and criteria:

1. Master degree or the equivalent, relevant to the area of study, and fulfilment of individual requirements of the institution to which the candidate will be registered
2. Previous publications related to the research themes of the IMPROVE project will be an added advantage
3. A personal statement demonstrating commitment to a career in research and academia
4. Willingness to commit time and effort to their PhD training
5. Knowledge and skills relevant to the PhD topic applied for (see specific project description for details)
6. Candidate not holding or applied for other fellowships, and not holding a PhD

7. Personal motivation of the candidates as demonstrated by their personal statements and responses during interview

Application procedure:

Each academic institution responsible for hosting the postgraduate students will release the IMPROVE “Call for applications” in accordance with its own and the registering institution eligibility requirements in consultation with the relevant academic departments in the collaborating African academic/research institution where the student will be hosted. The call will be announced internally within the hosting institutions, internationally and on the IMPROVE website.

Applications should be completed on the form below and with appropriate supporting documents requested

Applications must be sent no later than 21st of February 2017 at 05:00 pm Tanzanian time to: Director, Tanga Research Centre, E-mail: nimr.training@nimr.or.tz

Selection procedure:

Shortlisting

Applications will be reviewed according to the prevailing procedures in the registering and hosting institutions. Shortlisted applications will be screened by IMPROVE’s PhD Review Panel in accordance with the registering institution’s admission criteria.

Interview

Only shortlisted applicants that are eligible for interview will be contacted. An interview panel will consist of at least 4 members including the Head of Department (or representative) of the department where the student will be enrolled, student’s prospective supervisor/s, a representative of the IMPROVE consortium, and the Principal Investigators for the IMPROVE study of the African hosting institutions. Employment and administration will be in accordance to the hosting institutional procedures.

Application form:

Documentation to be included in the application:

- CV (use attached format max 2 page) and a publication list.
- Names and contact information for two referees.
- A synopsis focussing on the subject of the PhD call, describing shortly what is already known and key challenges and including some key references (Max. 1000 words excluding references)
- A personal statement on commitment to a career in research and academia (Max. 500 words)
- A brief career development plan (Max. 500 words)

For enrolment at University of Copenhagen the following is required:

Master degree in medicine or other relevant degrees equivalent to a Danish master's programme lasting 5 years. Please enclose copy of certificates of educational background, you will need to document that your prior studies are equivalent to a Danish master's degree).

Profound English language skills (you will need to take an English test (TOEFL or IELTS) unless you can document that English was the language of instruction during your BSc or MSc education).

Full name:

Age:

Gender

Academic degree obtained and date:

Current position and affiliation:

Names and contact details for two referees:
Synopsis: (Max. 1000 words excluding references)
Personal statement on commitment to a career in research and academia (Max. 500 words)
A brief career development plan (Max. 500 words)
Signature and date:

CV Template

CURRICULUM VITAE			
NAME	TITLE / PRESENT POSITION		
DATE OF BIRTH			
EDUCATION/OTHER RELEVANT TRAINING			
INSTITUTION	DEGREE <i>(if applicable)</i>	YEAR(s)	FIELD OF STUDY

Employment record (positions)

Involvement in research projects and management skills

Scientific qualifications of relevance for the application

Other relevant experiences

Scientific achievements