

DNDi

drugs for neglected
diseases initiative

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DNDi will be launched as a legal entity on 3 July 2003 when representatives of all the Founding Partners will sign the DNDi Charter at the City Hall in Geneva

Overview

Letters were mailed this month in response to the 71 submissions received by the joint DNDi-TDR call for letters of interest. Yves Champey spoke about DNDi at the Tropical Communicable Diseases Workshop in Rio. AfricaDNDi held its first conference in Nairobi where it was agreed that the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) would be the representative from Africa to the Founding Partners group. Nitya Udayraj, an MSF doctor in South Sudan reveals her concerns about the drugs she has to give her patients.

Follow up on the call for letters of interest

Each of the 71 investigators who submitted proposals in response to the call for letters of interest will have received letters from the joint DNDi-TDR by the time you receive this newsletter. Six investigators have been asked to submit a full proposal for a final selection before 15 July 2003.

Disease Control Priority Projects Workshop in Rio

Yves Champey gave a presentation on DNDi, and its aspirations in the field of tropical communicable diseases in a Workshop in Rio on 28 April to 1 May. Organised by NIH, Fiocruz and the Gates Foundation.

Meeting with the IFPMA

At the MMV meeting in Geneva on 17 May, Yves Champey met members of the IFPMA. He had an interesting discussion on DNDi with **Winston Gutteridge**, former Chief, Product R&D, Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), **Prof. Trevor Jones**, Director-General, The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI), and **Dr R. A. Mashelkar**, Director, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, India.

AfricaDNDi causes a stir in Nairobi

The first AfricaDNDi conference took place in Nairobi from 7-9 May. Enthusiastic participation from 18 African countries set the tone for the conference, a

tone that demanded more action and fewer words, that spoke of a willingness to pool their resources to solve one of the many crises plaguing Africa - lack of effective drugs for neglected diseases such as sleeping sickness and leishmaniasis. Representatives of the Kenyan Ministry of health were also present to declare their solidarity with DNDi's aspirations.

Participants were informed about the DNDi concept and the process by which promising projects in the research of leishmaniasis, sleeping sickness and Chagas disease are being identified for future DNDi support. In addition, R&D and manufacturing capacity in Africa were put under the microscope; agreement was reached on the critical need for a patient representative to the Founding Partners group; and doctors spoke about the numerous issues facing their patients. A former leishmaniasis patient, Francis Ayabei, spoke passionately about the need for cheaper, more effective drugs to treat the disease that almost killed him.

The workshop session was very productive. Three breakout groups discussed the needs and opportunities facing researchers in leishmaniasis, sleeping sickness and other neglected diseases. A list of next steps was drawn up for participants that included:

- Generate commitment from Africa DNDi core members for the DNDi vision.
- Give patient needs top priority.
- Select a representative from the African DNDi network for the DNDi Founding Partners Group.
- Agree on mode of operation/role of this representative
- Conduct a proper country by country capacity assessment followed by capacity building via technology
- "Spread the word" to relevant bodies in countries.
- Build strong African civil movement.
- Respond to invitations for R&D projects bearing the DNDi vision on mind.
- Solicit funding support from African governments.
- Encourage research into natural products.

- Maintain communications/correspondence within the network.

It was unanimously decided that KEMRI would represent the African network on the DNDi Founding Partners group. Davy Koech, Director KEMRI, accepted this role for his institution. As a Founding Partner, KEMRI will commit time, effort, and money to realizing DNDi's vision, and will be responsible primarily for coordination of projects all over Africa.

The meeting was followed by a press conference and written up in the major Kenyan local papers. European radio networks that transmit to Africa were keen to interview principal participants.

Copies of the Africa report, list of participants, and Francis Ayabei's testimony can be obtained from patricia.martorell@geneva.msf.org

Joining TDR's annual JCB meeting in Delhi

There will be a DNDi presentation at the annual meeting of TDR's Joint Coordinating Board in Delhi on the morning of 25 June. We are hoping to have Dr Ismail Merican, Mr. Paolo Buss, and Prof N.K. Ganguly, all Founding Partner representatives of DNDi, to participate in the 20-30 minute session with Bernard Pecoul. The morning session is devoted to TDR's Partnerships for Product Research and Development in which Rob Ridley, Functional Coordinator, TDR's Product Research and Development will outline how TDR works with other organisations such as DNDi, to develop tools.

Jaya Banerji, DNDi, and Samantha Bolton, who is managing TDR's fundraising, are jointly organizing a press conference in Delhi for the evening of 25 June.

Dr Reddy's Laboratories and CSIR, India

Bernard Pecoul and Jaya Banerji will meet Dr Reddy in Hyderabad and inform him of DNDi's progress so far. They will also meet Dr Mashelkar, the Director of India's renowned scientific research institution, CSIR, Centre of Scientific and Industrial Research in Delhi.

BIO 2003 convention

Yves Champey will chair a DNDi seminar at the BIO 2003 convention in Washington on 23 June. Panellists for the seminar will be: Prof Dyann Wirth, Dr Piero Olliaro, Dr C.M.Gupta, and Dr.Bennett Shapiro.

Recruitment adverts

The posts of Executive Director and Director of Research and Development will appear in the early June issues of Nature, Science, and Economist.

Preparations for the July launch of DNDi

3 July 2003 is an important day for DNDi. The founding partners will together sign the DNDi Charter that will formally declare the initiative as a legal, independent entity.

Although the interim team is still discussing logistics, the venue will be the City Hall, 2 Rue l'Hotel de Ville. An invitation to a reception, to be held after the signing ceremony, will be printed and mailed to over 200 people who have helped and encouraged DNDi from the very start.

A press conference is planned for the morning of 3 July at the Palais de Nations. A folder is being prepared for the occasion.

On 4 July, the first Board of Directors will meet.

Communication Matters

The DNDi website and the 8-minute video, meant as an awareness raising and fundraising tool, will be ready in time for the launch on 3 July.

Contact us

If you wish to contribute to the newsletter or would like to comment on any of the above topics, please write to jaya.banerji@geneva.msf.org

Your suggestions are welcome.