Introduction

Early evidence on mortality and ICU intervention rates for SARS-CoV-2 patients, and modelling of COVID in Africa, prompted calls for treatment to prevent progression of mild/moderate COVID.

WHO’s SOLIDARITY trial aimed to prevent death in hospitalised patients, and other studies looked at prevention. However, there were no large trials looking at prevention and hospitalisation in patients with mild or moderate COVID, and more specifically, in low- and middle-income countries.

The challenge was to rapidly join forces to conduct a large, flexible study to identify safe and effective treatments for outpatients, to minimize the need for hospitalisation in resource-constrained settings worldwide.

Methods

African research institutions already connected with or leading national COVID responses partnered with additional scientific institutions to form the ANTCOV Consortium.

The consortium developed a target product profile and clinical protocol to allow per-country adaptation while maintaining key common features.

ANTICOV is an open-label, randomised, comparative, adaptive platform clinical trial that will test the safety and efficacy of treatments, in 13 African countries, for up to 3000 patients with mild/moderate SARS-CoV-2 infection and symptoms up to 7 days before observation.

Study arms may be: added when data on promising new drug candidates or combinations become available; removed due to negative results; or interrupted if a treatment shows positive results. ANTCOV allows for the evaluation of multiple therapies, individually or in combination.

Treatment arms thus far include nitazoxanide/inhaled budesonide, ASAQ/ivermectin, and – pending approval of a recent amendment – fluvoxetine/inhaled budesonide. Ancillary studies addressing Immunological and epidemiological questions are being conducted in a subset of countries.

Adaptive design allows adjustments based on trial data without undermining trial validity and integrity

Participating countries & consortium partners

BURKINA FASO: Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale (INSERM), Agence Nationale de Recherche sur la Santé des Maladies Infectieuses et Rares (ANSM)
MAURITANIA: Ministry of Health, Direction pour le Développement sanitaire (DVS)
KENYA: Ministry of Health
SAHEL: Centre de Santé de la Nuit, Centre de Recherche, Centre de Santé de la Nuit, Centre de Recherche, Centre de Santé de la Nuit, Centre de Recherche, Centre de Santé de la Nuit
CÔTE D’IVOIRE: Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale (INSERM), Agence Nationale de Recherche sur la Santé des Maladies Infectieuses et Rares (ANSM)
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Results

The 26-partner consortium was set up very rapidly. The protocol was ready for submission by mid-June 2020 and funding was quickly granted, thanks to the clear medical need and experience of consortium members.

Nine of 13 countries have started recruitment. Despite support from AVAREF, approval processes per country took longer than anticipated, and importation of already-approved drugs remains a bottleneck in some countries. Changes in diagnostic referral impacted recruitment, so active screening was established at some sites.

An interim analysis was conducted after 300 patients were randomized with no treatment interruption resulting; the next is planned after 750 patients are randomized.

Conclusion

ANTICOV is driven by a unique research alliance to respond to region- and context-specific treatment needs, unlike much of the clinical research on COVID-19 to date.

In a context of emerging variants and inequitable vaccine access, the identification of therapeutics to prevent disease progression globally is a priority identified by the African region.

All clinical trial data generated by ANTCOV will be integrated and shared openly and transparently.

Every effort will be made to work with all relevant partners to ensure that treatments that prove safe and effective will be affordable, available, and accessible for all.

ANTICOV partners will work with the Unitaid-Act-A market dynamics group on availability, supply, and procurement.

ANTICOV: Initiating a platform adaptive trial for COVID outpatients in Africa

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