

ISARIC BULLETIN: SUMMARY

INTERNATIONAL SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY AND EMERGING INFECTION CONSORTIUM

SUMMARY

Two years on

The ISARIC bulletin will be published every other month, and is meant to underline highlights, challenges, and achievements to a wider audience. This issue

specifically aims to provide a summary of our work for the past two years, and where a total amount of £432,289 has taken us thus far.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

In two years we've...

- Set up a Coordinating Centre (CC) that is based at Oxford University's Centre for Tropical Medicine. ISARIC CC employs 3 people full time – a Clinical Lead, a Programme Manager, and a Clinical Trials Support Coordinator (the latter post is funded by the Li Ka Shing Foundation for one year).
- Set up an Executive Committee, an External Advisory Board, Regional hubs and/or representatives in Asia, the Americas, Africa, and Europe, and four working groups that meet regularly to plan and implement ISARIC activities. The working groups are: Inter-pandemic clinical trials; Global data collection and collation; Genomics, pathogenesis and pharmacology; and Changing clinical research paradigms for rapidly emerging public health threats.
- Gathered a network of networks with more than 40 networks and over 30 individual members based in or working within 93 different countries, and including clinicians, clinical researchers, titlists, public health, virology, microbiology, ethics, statistics, and epidemiologists.
- Set up the infrastructure to support the spread of information and communication within or outside of the network, including a website that will enable us to fulfil our aim to make all protocols and resources developed by and within ISARIC freely available and accessible globally. Other resources include a teleconference facility, newsletters, and social media activities (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn).
- Working closely with WHO, we've actively responded to outbreaks of MERS-CoV and H7N9 through being part of missions to affected areas, and by developing a joint WHO/ISARIC Biological Sampling Protocol for Severe Acute Respiratory Infection, which is being rolled out on a global scale in the event of an outbreak. The protocol and related documents are supported by a database that is developed and maintained by OUCRU Vietnam and made freely available to all who want to use it.

FUNDING

When getting started, ISARIC received core funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation - £143,827, the Wellcome Trust - £125,000, the Medical Research Council UK - £125,000, and INSERM - £38,462.

Additional funding and support have been received from the Li Ka Shing Foundation, Fondation Mérieux, and the Singapore Ministry of Health.

- Following clinical conference calls where clinicians, scientists, researchers and public health engaged in open exchange of information, and In collaboration with Public Health England, we have developed a Decision Support Tool for the Treatment of MERS-CoV. The tool is primarily intended as a resource for clinicians treating patients with MERS-CoV.
- As a result of engagement within ISARIC and during clinical and other conference calls related to MERS-CoV, ISARIC members and other experts, including participation from WHO and regional clinicians and researchers, are developing an interventional protocol for the use of convalescent plasma to treat MERS-CoV patients.
- ISARIC has become a GOARN partner (a partner of WHO's Global Outbreak Alert & Response Network). Our membership will enable the participation of ISARIC members (who are not already GOARN partners) to partake in outbreak response as and when it happens (ISARIC members were seconded to the Ebola outbreak in Guinea earlier this year)
- Conducted a capacities and capabilities survey of our membership in order to located the gaps and get a better overview of the existing capacity within ISARIC (survey to be repeated within ISARIC as the membership grows.) With our WHO and Saudi Arabian colleagues, ISARIC has also supported the re-writing of the survey for its use in determining the direction, capacities, and barriers to clinical research into MERS-CoV in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Through our European membership, we are part of PREPARE (FP7), and our members are leading four work packages. We are also supporting similar efforts in other parts of the world.
- ISARIC has also, through the University of Oxford and alongside Fondation Mérieux, submitted a proposal to the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Global Preparedness for Infectious Diseases Research call (HCO-04-2014), which was submitted in April this year.
- ISARIC investigators are involved with may other proposals and projects, such as a Global Health Trials study of oxygen therapy in children in Africa; and a joint project between The Global Health Network, Institut Pasteur, and ISARIC that is aiming to develop e-learning modules that will be made available on the ISARIC website.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Keeping ISARIC going beyond core funding

With three of ISARIC's four core grants spent, and an extension given for the Wellcome Trust grant that will run out in the end of 2014, ISARIC is currently trying to find ways to meet four challenges on the horizon:

1. Secure further funding for both core support for the Coordinating Centre and for network expansion.
2. Funding for a global adaptive randomized clinical trial on severe acute respiratory infection.
3. Documenting and sharing the work across the network for real-time dissemination to the global community.
4. Expanding membership amongst low and middle-income countries with high infectious disease burden.

Keen not to 'reinvent the wheel' and to ensure sustainability, we are actively monitoring and documenting ISARIC's progress and processes. We hope that ISARIC's experiences and the lessons learnt from setting up and running the Consortium can be utilized for the establishment of similar global collaborative research efforts in the future.