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Ebola: Europe–Africa research collaborations

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No one would disagree with Giuseppe Ippolito and colleagues¹ about the need to strengthen Europe–Africa research collaborations for health threats such as Ebola. This imperative must, however, build upon the current landscape of partnerships for epidemic diseases research in Africa and elsewhere. The Europe–Africa clinical research response to Ebola has been impressive, and includes vaccine safety studies in west Africa,^{2,3} the encouraging results of the ring vaccination trial in Guinea coordinated by WHO,⁴ the first ever drug trial in Ebola undertaken by the favipiravir (JIKI) trial consortium (NCT02329054),⁵ the RAPIDE consortium trials of brincidofovir (PACTR201411000939962) and TKM-130803 (PACTR201501000997429), and the Ebola-Tx (NCT02342171) and Ebola-CP (ISRCTN13990511) trials of convalescent plasma.

With the inclusion of diagnostic, virological, and anthropological research, Europe–Africa Ebola research collaborations have been prolific. These achievements, which should be celebrated, are partly the consequence of investments over the past 5 years in many of the areas highlighted by Ippolito and colleagues. To cite only a few, the International Severe Acute Respiratory and emerging Infections Consortium (ISARIC) has been striving to align existing networks since 2011, and has pioneered the development of pre-approved and adaptable syndrome-based protocols. ISARIC has African member networks and is active in building regional capacity and linkages. Affiliated with ISARIC, the European Union (EU)-funded Platform for European Preparedness Against (Re-)emerging Epidemics ([PREPARE](#)) is undertaking inter-epidemic syndrome-based studies across Europe, and both ISARIC and PREPARE have begun to address ethical, administrative, regulatory, and legal bottlenecks to rapid research. To accelerate and coordinate funding of a rapid research response to outbreaks, a network of funders has established the Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness ([GloPID-R](#)). The European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership, funded by the EU, provides substantial support for training and capacity development in Africa in the conduct of clinical trials. At the European country level, initiatives such as REACTing (REsearch and ACTion targeting emerging infectious diseases) and The Global Health Network ([TGHN](#)) have emerged to support research preparedness and capacity within low-income and middle-income countries. TGHN is providing free web-based courses to deliver research skills training to researchers in low-resource settings, with more than 40 000 of these being taken online in Africa so far. These many successes and ongoing initiatives should be the platforms from which we continue to strengthen Europe–Africa partnerships and help empower African researchers and institutions.

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