

Minutes of the TropNet meeting in St. Albans, April 2015

Due to the unforeseeable strike of the French air traffic controllers, many of our Spanish and French colleagues were unfortunately not able to join the meeting and had to cancel their participation in the last minute. This was very unfortunate and we hope to include their scheduled presentations at our next meeting in 2016.

1. Membership issues:

71 members, no changes in the last year

2. Summary of just closed and ongoing TropNet studies as well as studies with TropNet participation:

Closed TropNet studies:

- Treatment of severe malaria: study closed, summary of the data analysis and submitted manuscript.
- DengueTools study on imported dengue in travellers: study closed this week, all serum samples have been shipped from the participating sites to Madrid for full genome sequencing, entry of clinical and laboratory data at participating sites almost finished. Data analysis and publication of results will follow shortly.

Ongoing studies:

- Haemolysis after artemisinin treatment: setup of HaemoART study completed, ethical clearance in Berlin obtained, all study documents are available for download from the TropNet website, interested TropNet centres are welcome to participate.
- LeishMan - harmonization of molecular diagnosis and treatment of cutaneous and mucosal leishmaniasis. Update on current situation.
- Eurartesim TropNet-SigmaTau study on the treatment of uncomplicated *P. vivax* malaria with Eurartesim. Update on current situation.
- Eurartesim safety surveillance: Eurartesim pregnancy registry. Status: no case of a pregnant woman with accidental exposure to Eurartesim reported.
- StaphTrav: Staphylococcal skin and soft tissue infections in returning travelers, ongoing recruitment, status report: one recent publication, one upcoming publication.
- GiardiaTREAT & GiardiaREF: studies on first- & second-line treatment of giardiasis, setup of study completed ethical clearance in Basel obtained, all study documents are available for download from the TropNet website, interested TropNet centres are welcome to participate. Antwerp has joined, Almeria has joined, Barcelona submitted for ethical clearance, but the prohibitive fee of 1200 Euro for ethical clearance did not allow obtaining approval.

3. Discussion of ongoing studies at single TropNet centres with the potential for interested TropNet sites to participate:

- "Detection of Schistosoma CAA in travelers after high-risk water contact", Leiden University Medical Centre: interested centres are invited to contact Leo Visser (l.g.visser@lumc.nl) for details.

- “New diagnostic tests in acute schistosomiasis in travelers: contribution of schistosome DNA detection in serum, urine and feces compared to currently used parasitologic and serologic methods”, Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp: interested centres are invited to contact Jan Clerinx (jclerinx@itg.be) for details.
- “Travel Medicine App ‘TOURIST’: an exploratory study using mHealth to improve understanding of travel risks”, Emily Stone, Zurich. Real-time GPS tracking of tourists while traveling and matching travel-related exposure risks (emily.stone@ifspm.uzh.ch)

2. Annual report on observed imported diseases: participation of centres slightly better than in previous years, but still below 50%.

3. Review on the network’s direction and structure. Agreement to pursue the current structure with focus on (1) collaborative research, (2) policy development, and (3) teaching & training.

Ad (1):

The generally low numbers of specific diseases interesting for research at TropNet centres raise the question whether the invested time is worth the benefit. On the other hand, most relevant questions pertaining prevention, diagnosis and management of disorders in returning travellers cannot be adequately assessed in single centres alone. Discussion on obstacles and problems linked to collaborative research projects: the major obstacle is obtaining and financing ethical clearance at participating sites. Fees of ethics committees are often prohibitive and the currently non-existing standardization of formats on national and European level often demands extensive reformatting of protocols, informed consent forms, patient information material and translation of the documents in local language(s) etc. These major issues were judged, next to time and manpower shortage, to be the biggest hurdles for collaborative research projects. How to better deal with this issue remains an open question. At the TropNet meeting in Bordeaux and Hamburg, Matthieu Méchain had already outlined this critical issue. A round table and formation of a task force to target this issue should be considered.

Ad (2): The long time existing (Swiss) Expert Committee for Travel Medicine (ECTM) (which very successfully served as nucleus for the harmonization of Swiss, German and Austrian travel medicine recommendations) has been slowly extended over the years by a panel of expert-representatives from various European countries and may serve as a model for the development of European recommendations. Proposal to extend the current ECTM expert panel by representatives of the Scandinavian countries, Spain and Belgium. In addition, publishing the yearly ECTM decisions should assure to obtain more visibility and attention and to become recognized by national boards responsible for the compilation of national recommendations and guidelines.

Ad (3): Upcoming ECTMIH 2015 in Basel: agreement on a one-day TropNET pre-congress travel medicine course on September 5th 2015. The detailed program will follow shortly.

4. Election of coordinator, steering committee & research committee:

Proposal by Peter Chiodini to replace the currently existing election system of the network coordinator and the steering committee (so far: election of representatives every other year) by a more complex but possibly more sustainable system and to extend the steering and research committee by young colleagues (y). New election system agreed upon:

Coordinator: election for 4 years with the option to add a second term of 4 years.

Steering committee: election for 4 years, then at least 1 year pause, then option to add a second term of another 4 years.

of study documents to the local standard. Nevertheless, the efforts to implement studies within the network will continue.

The workshop once again showed the network's appreciation by all members. Many thanks to all participants for their dedication, presentations and contributions and cordial thanks to Ron and Helen Behrens for providing the meeting's venue, a superb dinner and the opportunity to enjoy St. Albans and its impressive cathedral!

May 2015