

NETWORK OF
WHO COLLABORATING CENTRES FOR
TRACHOMA



INCEPTION MEETING REPORT
DECATUR, GA, USA, 19–20 FEBRUARY 2015



**World Health
Organization**

Network of WHO Collaborating Centres for Trachoma

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Abbreviations

BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CT	<i>Chlamydia trachomatis</i>
DFID	Department for International Development
EDCTP	European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership
GTMP	Global Trachoma Mapping Project
HKI	Helen Keller International
LSHTM	London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
KCCO	Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology
MMDP	Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention
NTD-SC	Neglected Tropical Diseases Support Center
SAFE	Surgery, antibiotics, facial cleanliness, environmental improvement
TF	Trachomatous inflammation—follicular
TI	Trachomatous inflammation—intense
TT	Trachomatous trichiasis
UCSF	University of California, San Francisco
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WHOCC	World Health Organization Collaborating Centre

Background

There is international commitment, supported by World Health Assembly Resolution 51.11, to eliminate trachoma as a public health problem worldwide by the year 2020. Much work towards this goal has already been achieved, utilising mostly informal relationships between partners that include member states, the World Health Organization (WHO), academic institutions, donors and non-governmental organizations. Recognizing that we still have much to do, however, and that the 2020 target is rapidly approaching, in December 2014, the WHO Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases suggested formalising partnerships with and between a number of academic institutions that have for many years helped WHO to implement its mandated trachoma work, by establishing a network of WHO Collaborating Centres (WHOCCs) for Trachoma.

WHO believes that such formalised collaboration brings benefits to both parties. WHO gains access to top institutions worldwide and the institutional capacity to support its work. Institutions designated as WHOCCs gain increased visibility and recognition by national authorities, and greater attention from the public for the health issues on which they are active. Centres can also work together at international level via a formal WHO-led platform, facilitating better coordination and increased opportunities to mobilize resources from funding partners. This win-win relationship between WHO and its Collaborating Centres should make a difference to the prospects of trachoma elimination globally.

To be considered for designation as a WHOCC, eligible institutions must fulfil all of the following criteria:

- a) high scientific and technical standing at national and international levels;
- b) prominent place in the country's health, scientific or educational structures;
- c) high quality of scientific and technical leadership, and sufficient number of staff with high-level qualifications;
- d) stability in terms of personnel, activity and funding;
- e) strong working relationship with other institutions in the country, and at intercountry, regional and global levels;
- f) clear ability, capacity and readiness to contribute, both individually and within networks, to WHO programme activities, whether in support of country programmes or through participation in international cooperative activities;
- g) clear technical and geographical relevance of both the institution and its activities to WHO's programme priorities;
- h) at least two years of previous collaboration with WHO in carrying out jointly planned activities.

Institutions thought to meet these criteria for trachoma included (in alphabetical order):

- Dana Center for Preventive Ophthalmology, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore – already a WHO Collaborating Centre for research in trachoma and age-related macular degeneration; re-designation due by 24 June 2015
- Department of Global Health, Emory University, Atlanta
- Division of Parasitic Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Atlanta
- Faculty of Infectious and Tropical Diseases, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), London
- Francis I. Proctor Foundation, University of California San Francisco (UCSF), San Francisco
- Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology (KCCO), University of Cape Town, Cape Town
- Wake Forest School of Medicine, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem

To expedite the process of establishing the Network, to allow potential WHOCCs to discuss in detail what the Network might do, develop terms of reference and draft work plans, a two day meeting was held from 19-20 February 2015 at the International Trachoma Initiative, Decatur, GA.

Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by Anthony Solomon, Medical Officer for Trachoma at WHO Geneva, and Secretary to the WHO Alliance for the Global Elimination of Trachoma by 2020. He expressed an enthusiastic welcome from the WHO Department of Neglected Tropical Diseases, thanked participants for devoting time to prepare for and attend the meeting, and noted that only 70 months and 11 days remained before December 31, 2020: the target for Global Elimination of Trachoma as a public health problem. Participants (Annex 1) introduced themselves, and the purpose, outcome and outputs of the meeting were agreed, as follows:

Purpose: to accelerate the process of establishing a Network of WHOCCs for Trachoma, allow the proposed institutions to discuss in detail what the Network might do, develop terms of reference, and draft work plans.

Outcome: a nascent Network, composed of a number of institutions working towards designation as WHOCCs for Trachoma, plus the Secretariat at WHO headquarters supported by the relevant regional offices.

Outputs: a meeting report, draft terms of reference for each proposed Collaborating Centre, and draft work plans for each proposed Collaborating Centre.

The **Agenda** (Annex 2) was adopted without amendment.

Introduction to WHO Collaborating Centres

Beatriz Muñoz, Associate Professor of Ophthalmology, Dana Center for Preventive Ophthalmology, summarized the Dana Center's experience of being a WHOCC, a designation that has been in place since 1983. During that long association with WHO, the Dana Center has contributed to work on trachoma, onchocerciasis, vitamin A deficiency, age-related macular degeneration, cataract and glaucoma, by undertaking research, training, knowledge dissemination and meeting convening and write-up. Lessons learned

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