Building a Research Network through Clinical Research Collaboration

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Background

• Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is prone to frequent epidemics which need a coordinated and appropriate response.

• One of the pillars of an appropriate response is a robust research network that can rapidly investigate these epidemics and provide information for the prevention, control, and management of the outbreak.

• There are hardly any research networks in SSA focused on epidemic response and research

• The African Coalition for Epidemic Research Response and Training (ALERRT) Consortium is a network that is building a patient-centered clinical research network to respond to epidemics in SSA
ALERRT Network

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

WP1 × WP2

WP6 × WP7 × WP3

WP5 × WP4

19 Partners
13 Countries
4 European countries
9 African Countries
FISSA Study – Objectives

• **Scientific Objectives**
  - to describe the epidemiology, clinical aspects, and management of febrile illnesses in sub-Saharan Africa

• **Strategic Objectives**
  - to build a clinical research network capable of responding rapidly to epidemics.
FISSA Study - Organisation

CLINICAL SITES
• Supervisor
• PI

ICMC (WP1)
RCMC Centre
RCMC East
RCMC West
WP1
WP2
WP3
WP4
WP5
WP6
WP7
FISSA Study - Management

Set up process

- Site selection procedure drafting
- Proposition of clinical sites by ALERRT partners
  - 26 sites proposed by 16 partners
- Validation of selected sites by Steering Committee
- Endorsement of validated list by Executive Committee
- 15 sites enrolled participants in 11 countries

Central Africa
2 Countries – 4 Sites

West Africa
6 countries – 8 Sites

East Africa
3 Countries – 3 Sites

ALERRT is part of the EDCTP2 Programme supported by the European Union under grant agreement RIA2016E-1612
FISSA Study - Implementation

- Drafting protocol & tools development
- Approvals of Ethics committees
- Training
- First inclusion Dec. 2019
- End of recruitment Dec. 2021

- Monthly steering committee meetings
- Monthly international coordination meetings
- Bi-monthly regional meetings
- Monitoring visits

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FISSA Study - Challenges

- Managing several ethics committees with different procedures
- COVID 19 pandemic (reduction in inclusions, site visits impossible)
- Turn over in trained staffs
- Communication difficulties due to language barriers
FISSA Study - Achievements

• Introduction to research with the development of an interest in research in some teams

• Managing in a bilingual way (E-mails, reports, documents…)

• Remote monitoring of the study to respond to an unexpected restriction on travel due to the COVID 19 through the implementation of procedures to adapt to the situation
FISSA Study - Achievements

- Survey on laboratory capacity in collaboration with WP2
- Development of e-learning module on the protocol in collaboration with WP5
- Establishment of a research network through the linking of researchers from different fields, different languages in different regions with different practices
- Development of collaborations on new projects
CONCLUSION

• FISSA succeeded in creating a network of research sites that has grown stronger over the years.

• Several lessons learned from the implementation of this study will be used to strengthen and expand this network.

• A model of research partnerships for an equitable response to health emergencies

• A Network built and ready for new research on epidemic-prone diseases
Acknowledgments

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