

HEALTH

Scientists seek to shorten the time for treating TB from six to three months

Study seeks effective TB drug

The new study will test multiple potential treatments to select the best regimen that will be used in a trial before it's approved by licensing authorities

By The Citizen
Correspondent

Dar es Salaam. An international study aimed at identifying new treatment regimens that could shorten the length of TB treatment from six to three months has started in Tanzania and South Africa.

The study, dubbed Multi-arm-multi-stage-TB (MAMS-TB) trial, uses a combination of established drugs and novel drugs and is funded by the European Developing Country Clinical Trials Partnership

BACKGROUND INFO: TB CASES WORLDWIDE

There are nearly 8 million new TB cases each year and more than a million deaths. Conventional market solutions to TB drug development are not expected to provide a solution. The PanACEA consortium has been able to develop capacity of African centres to tackle TB through building infrastructure and supporting the professional development of African and European scientists. There are 11 collaborating centres in sub-Saharan Africa and a growing group of European collaborators.

(EDCTP) through the Pan African Consortium for the Evaluation of Anti-tuberculosis agents or PanACEA consortium.

The MAMS design enables regimens with unsatisfactory outcomes to be dropped rapidly. It allows the research-

ers to test multiple potential treatments quickly to select the best regimen to be used in a trial that would allow a new treatment to be approved by licensing authorities.

"The MAMS-TB trial is a unique opportunity to develop a novel TB treatment rap-

idly that will substantially shorten treatment," said the Chief Investigator, Mr Martin Boeree from Nijmegen University.

Mr Stephen Gillespie from St Andrews University noted that this new development has occurred because of the work of many collaborators in Africa and the work that the consortium has been doing to develop the capacity to test new regimens in an African setting.

One of the Principle Investigators, Ms Lilian Tina Mwinja from the Ifakara Health Institute (IHI) said that the consortium is an excellent example of effective bilateral collaboration.