

Creating a Gender sensitive platform for clinical research in WANETAM (TALENT)

Call for applications for TALENT PhD Training

Introduction

1. The WANETAM Network has been awarded funding by the European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), to support the training of up to seven female PhD candidates
2. This is an open call for female candidates. Selected candidates shall be affiliated with one of the WANETAM member institutions. They may be staff of the institution or have an affiliation to a WANETAM institution
3. Successful PhD candidates will receive a monthly stipend of €700 Research costs, travel allowance, essential equipment such as laptops, maternity cover and other justifiable eligible expenditures will be included in the grant
4. Duration of the PhD training will cover 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024, with a possibility of a 6-month extension
5. The TALENT PhD Programme is coordinated by Professor Dorothy Yeboah of NMIMR in Ghana and the overall Coordinator of WANETAM is Professor Souleymane Mboup of RARS/IRESEF in Senegal who is deputised by Dr Assan Jaye of the MRC in Gambia

Scope of the Programme

1. **Eligibility – Eligible candidates must meet the following criteria**
 - a. **Be female scientist**
 - b. Be a member of staff or affiliated to one of the WANETAM member institutions
 - c. Be in possession of an MSc or MPhil degree in a relevant field from any recognised university
 - d. Must have at least one published manuscript
2. **The specific areas of focus are**
 - a. The clinical epidemiology of DR-TB, linking pathogen genomic data to clinical data, including treatment outcome and associated risk factors in the context of comorbidities such as HIV and Diabetes Mellitus (DM). Interaction with epidemics such as COVID-19 within the study will be encouraged. A successful candidate will be supervised by Professor Dorothy Yeboah Manu of the Noguchi Memorial Institute of Medical Research, University of Ghana. Dyeboah-manu@noguchi.ug.edu.gh
 - b. Childhood TB diagnosis. This PhD proposal will aim to find solutions to the challenge of diagnosing childhood TB. The student shall seek to optimise the collection of multiple non-invasive samples, including stool and urine, and testing them with Xpert Ultra and FujiFilm, urine lipoarabinomannan (LAM) assays, respectively, in addition to routine tests under programmatic condition, could improve diagnosis and increase the case detection in the local health systems. Interaction with epidemics such as COVID-19 within the study will be encouraged. The project will leverage on the existing multi-country diagnostic research platform for childhood TB, established by

WANETAM. A Successful candidate will be supervised by Dr Toyin Togun of the MRC Unit The Gambia at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine toyin.togun@lshtm.ac.uk

- c. Dynamics of the interactions between Malaria and Covid19. The PhD will provide a platform for understanding the dynamics of the co-infections and morbidities including genetic factors associated with disease and treatment response. The students will interrogate the interactions by employing molecular diagnostics, serological surveys and genetic analysis to pathogens and human populations. A successful student will be supervised by Dr Alfred Ngwa of the MRC Unit The Gambia at LSHTM alfred.ngwa@lshtm.ac.uk
- d. Health Economics – The PhD will select one country in West Africa and explore how its health system can adapt its resource generation, pooling and purchasing mechanisms to ensure it can respond to emerging and re-emerging infections, including Covid19 in an effective, efficient and equitable manner. A successful student will be supervised by Dr Melisa Martinez Alvarez of the MRC Gambia at LSHTM Melisa.Martinez-Alvarez@lshtm.ac.uk
- e. Evolution of Schistosomiasis in the West Africa Sub Region - This PhD will elucidate the schistosome population structure, transmission dynamics, evolution and subsequent association to human host morbidity and disease control, with a focus on novel zoonotic hybrid species, in a selected West African Country under changing environmental settings and drug pressures. Study of interaction with epidemics such as COVID-19 will be encouraged. A successful student shall be supervised by Dr Magatte Ndiaye of the University of Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar magatte.ndiaye@ucad.edu.sn

Application and review Process

- a) Applications will be invited in line with the areas identified by the supervising PIs under each specific area above.
- b) Applicants should include the following requirements in their application:
 - Motivation letter detailing why they want to undertake the PhD
 - A research proposal covering one of the areas highlighted above (not more than 5 pages)
 - Up to date detailed CV (not more than 3 pages)
 - Support letters from two referees with their up-to-date contact details. The support letters should detail; the candidate's suitability to take on the PhD research, academic ability (capacity for original thought and analytic aptitude), motivation and perseverance in achieving objectives.
- c) Applications should be submitted by **15 September 2021**.
- d) Short-listed applications will be invited for a virtual or face-face selection interview if conditions allow

- e) All candidates will be informed of the application outcomes by **end of November 2021**. Successful candidates will be required to sign a TALENT fellowship agreement expressing commitment to undertake and complete the training.
- f) Selected candidates will receive funding for eligible research costs that will be supplemented by the supervising PI or their home institution.

Final award of scholarship to selected candidates will be subject to successful University registration for the PhD by December 2021.

Communications: Intending applicants can discuss their plans with the lead sponsors with emails indicated. Any other clarifications can be sent to dkanteh@mrc.gm

Deadline for applications

All applications are to be received by close of business day of 15th September 2021

Applications should be sent to Muhammed Sonko at msonko@mrc.gm