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PRESS RELEASE

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY STEMS TB DRUG-RESISTANCE TREND THROUGH QUALITY RESEARCH

Working with Ministry of Health, the Department of Medical Microbiology in the School of Medicine, Makerere University College of Health Sciences has secured US \$10 million from World Bank to establish Centre of Excellence Laboratories in Mbale, Gulu, Mbarara and Arua. Already a state-of-the-art laboratory has been built in Mulago to carry out rapid drug resistance detection; detection that used to take 3 to 6 months can now take one day.

WHO estimates that by 2015 there will be two million cases of multidrug-resistant Tuberculosis (TB) globally. In Uganda, research shows that about 500 new cases of multidrug-resistant TB occur every year, 50 percent of which are co-infected with HIV.

Earlier, Makerere University College of Health Sciences, working with the Wellcome Trust, a UK Charity, pioneered the treatment of Drug Resistant TB which is very difficult to cure. Twenty people were treated and cured and the project was handed over to the National TB Programme.

The Medical Microbiology Department and the Ministry of Health have also secured funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) – CDC (PEPFAR) and have renovated and upgraded the National TB Reference Laboratory (NTRL) to a world class laboratory. As a result the NTRL has been recognised as a Supra-National Reference Laboratory receiving samples from other countries as well as conducting training for them.

In addition, a specimen referral system has been established where samples of difficult cases are referred to the NTRL from upcountry. A quality assurance system has also been established for all TB laboratories in the country.

A Kampala Drug Survey was conducted as well as a national survey, which showed the level of drug resistance in the country. This helps in guiding control measures.

Working with SIDA/Sarec, the College has made another contribution in this area through evaluation of various tests to detect resistant TB, some of which have been approved by WHO for use in Uganda and other countries in the world.

Another important breakthrough is that the Department of Medical Microbiology working with Sida SAREC found out that 70% of TB in Uganda is caused by one type of organism which the research team named Uganda Geno-type. "This is a very important achievement for us because it might give clues on the control of TB in Uganda", said Associate Professor Moses Joloba, Head of the Medical Microbiology Department and also a member of the research team.

Under the Aeras Global TB Vaccine Foundation, The European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (**EDCTP**), The Infectious Diseases Institute (IDI), and the College of Health Sciences through the Department of Microbiology have started work to evaluate various TB vaccines. "We have a big population in Iganga and Kampala which we are studying ", Professor Joloba added.

The College of Health Sciences working together with its global partners is contributing to national and regional efforts aimed at stemming this trend.

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