

STriTuVaD press release

STriTuVaD consortium meeting lays down the foundations for a fruitful EU-India cooperation in the fight against Tuberculosis

New Delhi, 23 January 2019

The [Horizon 2020](#)¹ project STriTuVaD (In Silico Trial for Tuberculosis Vaccine), a consortium of European, American and Indian entities, held its Inauguration and Investigators meeting in New Delhi, India, on 23 January in the presence of Indian and European authorities. The meeting was hosted by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) who is the Indian lead scientific in this project.

The meeting was a good occasion to present the objectives of the project and how it came about. It showed how important international cooperation is to address health concerns in India which in turn could become a global challenge.

Dr Balram Bhargava, Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), gave an overview of the research engaged in so far at national level, to address the TB burden India is facing. He had high expectations in this international consortium for finding rapidly and at affordable conditions a vaccine. Professor Dipendra K. Mitra, Head of the Department of Transplant Immunology and Immunogenetics at AIIMS, outlined how the data for the clinical trials would be collected and Dr Guleria gave an overview on the capacity at AIIMS on TB vaccine trials. Professor Marco Viceconti (Bioengineering at the University of Bologna) stressed the importance of In Silico Trials, whose development is the main aim of the STriTuVaD project.

Both Dr Reinhard Glueck (representative of Zydus Cadila, Chairman of Etna Biotech coordinator of the STriTuVaD project) and Ms Tania Friederichs, Head of Research and Innovation Section at the EU delegation to India, underlined the importance of international cooperation. For Dr Glueck, who knows well the Indian scientific community, this project is responding to a real need and has the capacity to take up a challenge which many still think is not possible: finding a vaccine for TB. With this project, and thanks to new technologies, we can say that at least we try the impossible. Ms Friederichs welcomed very much that, through joined efforts, Europe and India are engaged together in one project, including both Academia and Industry. This was a good illustration of Europe's commitment to help addressing global challenges, as Professor Viceconti just illustrated, due to increased mobility of persons, a pandemic is never to be excluded. She thanked the Department of Biotechnology to have co-funded the Indian partner AIIMS. Ms Friederichs also recalled that the European Research and Innovation programme 'Horizon 2020', was open to the world. She expressed hope that, after this first success case, more international cooperation on health, or any other area of mutual interest to India and Europe, will follow. Our doors are widely open to India.

After the opening addresses, the consortium members presented the work in the project, to begin with by Dr. Epifanio Fichera from Etna Biotech who is the coordinator and who stressed importance to deliver the work according to agreed timelines to ensure a smooth

¹ The eighth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, named "[Horizon 2020](#)", is funding programmes created by the European Commission to support and foster research in the European Research Area (ERA).

implementation of the project. Prof. Francesco Pappalardo (Dept. of Drug Sciences at the University of Catania), Dr. Miguel Juarez (Lecturer of Maths & Statistics at the University of Sheffield, UK), Prof Anant Mohan (Dept. of Pulmonary Medicine, AIIMS), Dr Corey Casper (Chief Scientific Officer at IDRI), Ms Olga Rué and Dr. Pere-Joan Cardona (respectively CEO and Scientific and Clinic advisor of Archivel Farma) elaborated on how they plan the work to come to a collective success.

At the end of two days of work, the consortium emerged with a solid plan for the execution of the clinical trial where two new therapeutic vaccines developed respectively by Archivel Farma and IDRI will be tested. The trial will also be used to quantify the predictive accuracy of the UISS computer model developed by Prof. Pappalardo, capable of predicting the individual response of patients with active TB when treated with new therapies. This information will be essential in the future regulatory qualification on these in silico trials methods, which we hope will speed up and reduce the costs for the development of more effective therapies for this deadly disease².

² In 2017 more than 10 million cases of active TB were reported worldwide, which resulted in 1.6 million deaths; of these around 220,000 were reported India. Source: "[Global tuberculosis report](#)". World Health Organization.



From Top left, to bottom right: Reinhard Glueck and Tania Friederichs; Salil Mitra; Tania Friederichs, Balram Bhargava, Reinhard Glueck, Randeep Guleria; Tania Friederichs; Randeep Guleria, Tania Friederichs, Balram Bhargava.

About STRITUVAD:

Acronym: STriTuVaD

Title: In Silico Trial for Tuberculosis Vaccine Development

Project ID: 777123

Funded by the European Commission under: H2020-EU.3.1.5. - Methods and data

Duration: From 2018-02-01 to 2022-07-31

Total cost: EUR 5 050 656,25

Consortium:

- ETNA BIOTECH SRL, Italy
- UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI CATANIA, Italy
- THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD, United Kingdom
- ARCHIVEL FARMA, SL, Spain
- STICHTING TUBERCULOSIS VACCINE INITIATIVE, Netherlands
- INFECTIOUS DISEASE RESEARCH INSTITUTE, United States
- THE ALL-INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, India
- ALMA MATER STUDIORUM – UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA, Italy