

Wellcome Trust awards Â£5 million for neglected diseases research

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The Wellcome Trust has awarded a £5 million seeding drug discovery award to GlaxoSmithKline plc (GSK) to support its open approach to discovering and developing urgently needed new treatments for diseases of low-income countries

The funding will help to move early-stage research to find new medicines for diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, leishmaniasis and sleeping sickness to the next level. Scientists from around the world will work in collaboration with GSK drug discovery experts at the GSK facility in Tres Cantos, Madrid, with the ultimate goal of developing two high-quality experimental drugs over the next five years.

Diseases of low-income countries affect millions of people and yet research to find new treatments is struggling, owing to the complexity of the science and low return on investment. To address this, GSK set up its Tres Cantos facility to be an engine room of scientific innovation, stimulating more R&D into diseases that affect the world's poorest people.

In 2010, GSK opened the doors of its Tres Cantos facility to external researchers to create the Open Lab. The result is academic scientists working alongside GSK scientists at a dedicated facility, enabling them to benefit from the facilities, resources and knowledge of a major pharmaceutical company to help them advance their own research projects.

The £5 million Wellcome Trust funding announced today will be used to take this open approach a significant step further, tackling the next phase of drug development with the aim of turning promising active compounds into high-quality experimental drugs. The funding will provide the opportunity to progress the most promising projects underway by independent scientists at the Open Lab and from GSK's own research portfolio.

Dr Nick Cammack, head of GSK's Tres Cantos Medicines Development Campus, which houses the Open Lab, said, "This support highlights a growing recognition that collaborative and open research is the key to tackling these devastating

diseases. Since adopting an open approach to discovering new medicines for developing world diseases, we've hosted some of the world's brightest academic scientists at Tres Cantos."

He added, "The fusion of their academic excellence with GSK expertise has yielded some really exciting research projects. This tremendous show of support from Wellcome means we now have the potential to start driving these projects further towards finding new medicines."

Dr Richard Seabrook, head, business development at the Wellcome Trust, said, "Academic researchers are making incredible progress in our understanding of neglected diseases, yet we've still got a bottleneck when it comes to the development of new drugs. Taking a more collaborative approach, as GSK have through their Open Lab, will see these advances reap the full benefit of the industry's commercial expertise to give us the best chance of securing new treatments for these devastating diseases."