

27 November 2013

LMIC Biobank and Cohort Network (BCNet) Launched

IARC is pleased to announce the formation of the Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) Biobank and Cohort Network (BCNet).

Biobanks, which facilitate the collection and storage of high-quality biological specimens and associated information, play a key role in scientific research on disease prevention, screening, and treatment.



In contrast to the situation in high-income countries (HICs), biobank infrastructures and related standard guidelines and protocols are much less developed in LMICs. This constitutes a serious barrier to high-quality scientific research projects in disease control in LMICs.

The aim of BCNet is to provide a platform for collaboration between its partners, IARC and the international community, to support biobanking and cohort-building activities, and to develop sustainable biobanking research infrastructures to facilitate the collection of high-quality biological samples for research, using best practice principles and guidelines.

In collaboration with the US National Cancer Institute - Center for Global Health (NCI-CGH), IARC hosted the first BCNet International Working Group meeting in Lyon, France, on 25 and 26 September 2013, as the first step in establishing the network.

Twenty-three participants attended the meeting, representing fourteen LMICs in the five WHO regions, including Egypt, Gambia, India, Jordan, Kenya, Lithuania, South Africa, Senegal, Sudan, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe; and nine international societies and organizations with similar interests in supporting biobanking infrastructure.

The international partners include the US National Cancer Institute (NCI), the Biobanking and Biomolecular Resources Research Infrastructure - European Research Infrastructure Consortium (BBMRI-ERIC), the Biobanking and Biomolecular Resources Infrastructure of Sweden (BBMRI.se), the International Society of Biological and Environmental Repositories (ISBER), the European, Middle Eastern and African Society for Biopreservation and Biobanking (ESBB), the African Organisation for Research & Training in Cancer (AORTIC), the National Cancer Research Institute, United Kingdom (NCRI), the Spanish National Cancer Research Centre (CNIO), the Public Population Project in Genomics and Society (P³G), the Centre for Genomics and Policy (CGP) and the Latin American and Caribbean Biobank Network (REBLAC).

The meeting participants discussed the challenges of maintaining functional biobanks in resource-constrained settings; the feasibility of, and need for, an LMIC biobank network; specific aims and objectives; and short-term and long-term goals. Members also discussed IARC's role in the network and advised on the next steps to be taken.

A steering committee was put in place to guide and advise the direction of the network. Members are Tim Rebbeck (AORTIC), Jan-Eric Litton (BBMRI.se), Rita Lawlor (ESBB), Marianne Henderson (NCI/ISBER), Ma'n Zawati (Centre of Genomics and Policy), Manuel M Morente (CNIO), Bai Lamin Dondeh (Medical Research Council [UK], Gambia), Maher Sughayer (King Hussein Cancer Center, Jordan), Bonginkosi Duma (National Health Laboratory Services, South Africa), Sonia Abdelhak (Institut Pasteur, Tunisia), and Samuel Kyobe (Makerere University, Uganda). The IARC coordinating team consists of Maimuna Mendy (IARC), Joakim Dillner (BBMRI.se), Bakary Sylla (IARC), and Elodie Caboux (IARC).