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UCT part of new TB trial that will shorten duration of treatment

A clinical trial has been developed that will identify new tuberculosis (TB) treatment regimens which will significantly shorten the duration of treatment from six to three months. The trial is part of an international "common research" initiative which involves the Centre for TB Research Innovation (CTBRI) at the University of Cape Town's Lung Institute.

The clinical trial is not only innovative in design and its collaborative nature, but it is also the first major African TB study to use a complete source-based electronic data capture and verification system.

Funded by the European Developing Country Clinical Trials Partnership, the Multi-arm-multi-stage-TB (MAMS-TB) trial uses a combination of established drugs and novel drugs. This new approach addresses constraints to new drug development and offers a more efficient approach that could reduce the time it takes to bring the treatment to the market.

Dr Rod Dawson, head of the CTBRI research unit and a principal investigator at the African Consortium for the Evaluation of Anti-tuberculosis agents (PanACEA), says: "The aim is to develop a portfolio of new TB treatment combinations, free of political or commercial constraints, and to develop a network of African trial centres large enough to host pivotal phase III trials." PanACEA has been developing capacity by building infrastructure and supporting the professional development of African and European scientists. The PanACEA network includes 11 African institutions in six countries, linked with four European institutions.

The MAMS-TB trial is being conducted in Tanzania and South Africa, with two sites in Cape Town: the UCT Lung Institute and TASK Applied Science in Bellville. Patients recruited from City of Cape Town clinics will be asked to take novel TB treatment combinations and followed up with intensively for a year.

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