

News Release:

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Emory Will Partner with GlaxoSmithKline on Drug Research for Neglected Tropical Disease

New Intellectual Property Pool includes patents and scientific "know-how"

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Scientists at the Emory Institute for Drug Discovery will partner with GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and Alnylam Pharmaceuticals on research aimed at developing new drugs for neglected tropical diseases in least developed countries.

Emory University has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with GSK as the first university to join GSK's new "intellectual property pool," consisting of hundreds of patents and patent applications, scientific reports and analysis. Under the MOU, Emory will have access to GSK scientists who can provide information about the history and current development of selected compounds targeted to treat neglected diseases.

In a speech given today at the Council for Foreign Relations, Andrew Witty, chief executive officer of GSK, announced the intellectual property pool as one of several new initiatives targeted at diseases that disproportionately affect the world's poorest countries.

With their vast experience in drug discovery, Emory scientists will benefit from as well as contribute the scientific "know-how" that can sort through the wealth of intellectual property and research data and select the most promising compounds that could lead to effective new medicines.

"Emory's history of successful drug discovery and its strategic focus on global health make it an ideal institution for this research collaboration," says James Curran, MD, MPH, dean of Emory's Rollins School of Public Health. "We applaud GlaxoSmithKline for creating this innovative knowledge pool, we look forward to this outstanding opportunity to continue our contributions to diminishing the burden of neglected diseases in developing countries."

The 16 neglected diseases targeted by the new program are those identified by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration: tuberculosis, malaria, blinding trachoma, buruli ulcer, cholera, dengue/dengue haemorrhagic fever, racunculiasis, fascioliasis, human African trypanosomiasis, leishmaniasis, leprosy, lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, soil transmitted helminthiasis and yaws.

The patents in the intellectual property pool are not generally filed in the least developed countries, and the new initiative is designed to encourage research and development of new medicines for the countries, as defined by the United Nations.

The independent group, BIO Ventures for Global Health will administer GSK's intellectual property pool.

The Emory Institute for Drug Discovery was established in August 2009, with the dual mission of carrying out early-stage discovery and preclinical drug research aimed at developing small-molecule therapeutics and training new generations of researchers in a multidisciplinary drug discovery environment. The EIDD focuses on commercially neglected diseases, global health partnerships, mentored research, and multidisciplinary interactions both within and outside the University.

"The EIDD is an excellent model that preserves the academic independence of university-based laboratory research while allowing Emory opportunities such as this one to closely partner with industry," says EIDD director Dennis Liotta, PhD. "We look forward to accessing and contributing to knowledge pool and to making significant progress in addressing these challenging and devastating diseases."

The EIDD builds on Emory's strong history of drug discovery research, including the invention of drugs taken by more than 94 percent of patients in the U.S. with HIV/AIDS and thousands more around the globe. The EIDD collaborates closely with other drug discovery efforts at Emory, including the Emory Chemical Biology Discovery Center, part of the National Cancer Institute's Chemical Biology Consortium.

The Memorandum of Understanding states that once the EIDD identifies technologies or selected compounds it wishes to pursue further, Emory and GSK will develop a license agreement and additional collaborative research aimed at advancing the development of new medicines.

GSK also will collaborate with Anylam Pharmaceuticals, and with the South African company iThemba Pharmaceuticals, using the intellectual property pool to encourage research and discovery into new medicines to treat tuberculosis. iThemba, founded in 2003 by Emory Professor of Chemistry Dennis Liotta, PhD, and research partners in England, the United States and South Africa, is committed to developing new and affordable medicines for infectious diseases of the poor.

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