

# ImaBiotech Joins ERA4TB Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) Fighting Tuberculosis

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The ERA4TB (European Regimen Accelerator for Tuberculosis) project is a public-private initiative dedicated to the development of drugs against tuberculosis. With a team of more than 30 organizations and a budget of over 200 million euros, ERA4TB will focus on developing a new, improved tuberculosis treatment. The partners will share their expertise, knowledge and resources to rapidly progress new candidate drugs into clinical trials.

Tuberculosis is the leading cause of death by an infectious disease worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 10 million people became ill with tuberculosis in 2018, and two million died. Even though the incidence of tuberculosis is declining, the drug-resistant form constitutes a growing threat to the safety of the world's population. It is in this spirit that the UN has pledged to end the tuberculosis epidemic by 2030 through joint action of its member states.

David Barros-Aguirre, Project Lead for ERA4TB and VP and Head of Tuberculosis Research, Global Health R&D, GSK said, "We are very excited about the start of ERA4TB, a unique collaborative project in the field of tuberculosis where the expertise from public partners and a pipeline of promising preclinical candidates from pharmaceutical companies merge to accelerate the development of novel clinical candidates. The ultimate goal is to deliver an innovative and differentiated combination regimen for the treatment of TB, which can play a key role in the elimination agenda."

Standard tuberculosis treatment is based on a combination regimen of four drugs that were all developed more than 60 years ago. Treatment lasts for at least six months and, in the case of resistance to the standard drugs, can be as long as two years. The current drugs are inefficient by today's standards and a new, faster-acting and safer treatment is required to reduce the length of therapy and to overcome the menace of drug-resistant strains. Until now, the development of new drugs has been slow and their incorporation into tuberculosis treatment regimens conducted in a sequential manner.

Stewart Cole, Scientific leader of ERA4TB and President of the Institut Pasteur, said, "ERA4TB has assembled an impressive array of resources to seamlessly harness the agility and innovation of academia with the pragmatism and professionalism of pharma. I am confident that this powerful European initiative will speed the path to TB elimination."

ERA4TB is set to change the paradigm of tuberculosis treatment development by abandoning the sequential approach in favor of a parallel pathway, which will allow the simultaneous investigation of more than a dozen drug candidates. This approach, materialized in a versatile collaborative network, will allow ERA4TB to optimize the development costs of new tuberculosis drugs and, more importantly, greatly reduce the development times of the new regimens needed to eliminate this epidemic.

According to Juan José Vaquero, project coordinator from UC3M (University Carlos III Madrid) and leader of the imaging team, "ERA4TB will change the paradigm for the development of new drugs by adopting a flexible and modular collaboration scheme in which research efforts can be rapidly mobilised to where they are most needed allowing several molecules to be investigated simultaneously. This will save both time and money."

As the EU leader in Molecular Imaging, more particularly in the pharma field, ImaBiotech will be using its innovative platforms to confirm the drug exposure and efficacy in connection with bacteria responsible of the disease.

David Bonnel, ImaBiotech Executive Director, said, "We are really proud and excited to be part of this international initiative in the field of tuberculosis. We will use our innovative imaging platforms with our partners to accelerate the drug development and be part of a real change for tuberculosis patients".

About the ERA4TB Innovative Medicines Initiative:

ERA4TB is sponsored by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme and the European pharmaceutical industry (via EFPIA) under the auspices of the Innovative Medicines Initiative 2 Joint Undertaking and part of the AMR Accelerator umbrella.

About ImaBiotech:

ImaBiotech is a Contract Research Organization (CRO) with facilities in Boston (MA, USA) and Lille (Eurasanté Parc, France). The company offers innovative services and software to the pharmaceutical research sector, providing highly *in vivo* informative drug efficacy and toxicity evaluations during preclinical and clinical stage developments at cellular level, making better and safer drugs.

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