



COVID-19 Research Synergies Meetings

Virtual events – July 16,17, 20, 21 and 23, 2020

Concept note

Background

As the pandemic evolves, countries and international organizations have had to manage an unprecedented situation where the three phases of the pandemic - Preparedness, Response & Recovery - are dealt with simultaneously. This multi-faceted response demands the creation of real-time evidence to inform public health policy decisions and the development of medical countermeasures to detect, treat and prevent the disease. International solidarity and exceptional coordination are needed to maximize timely impact of research and to build efficiencies in research investments globally and identify now how collectively we will end COVID-19.

Scope

The purpose of the series of thematic sessions is to promote and establish collaboration and synergies between researchers funded by [GloPID-R members](#) (national and global funders) in order to maximise the use of the available resources, as well as generating connections between ongoing research projects, which ultimately could add value to the research being undertaken. It is envisaged that sharing of information on progress, barriers and outstanding gaps between researchers and GloPID-R members will facilitate a path forward on a collective effort to end COVID-19.

Objectives

1. Between GloPID-R funded researchers, to provide the opportunity to network amongst each other, to provide a platform for information exchange, and to foster collaboration.
2. Align research efforts, where feasible, among researchers funded through GloPID-R members' rapid response calls and with the WHO COVID-19 Working Groups to streamline efforts and support adequate information sharing within the research community as a way to avoid unnecessary duplication.
3. Discuss the data and evidence being generated by GloPID-R funded researchers and evaluate whether there are adequate pathways/structures in place to ensure research findings are:
 - a. feeding into the COVID-19 response
 - b. supporting the identification of new funding calls on outstanding research gaps and new avenues of research
4. Identify barriers to the above that the funders can facilitate removing.

Participants

- Researchers funded through GloPID-R members' rapid COVID-19 response calls
- GloPID-R members (funders representation)
- WHO representatives and COVID-19 Research Working Group chairs
- CEPI & other key stakeholder representative/s

- Representation from countries in a range of resource settings, as well countries experiencing second peaks, waves or, high incidence

The 4 themes to be covered across four sessions in July are:

1. Vaccines
2. Therapeutics
3. Social science
4. Preparing for a second wave; understanding transmission and how to stop it

Each session will have an ambitious focus on “How to end COVID-19”, with discussions on what is needed from a research perspective to expedite the end of COVID-19. Two co-chairs for each session will be supported by key speakers providing an overview on an important topic and followed by a targeted wider conversation by all participants. Below is a short paragraph on each thematic area:

1. Vaccines

The development, high-scale production, and equitable deployment of a safe and effective vaccine are one of the most promising avenues to end the COVID-19 pandemic. This session will look at the promising candidates in development and explore what is needed to support a diversified landscape of candidates and their progression from preclinical to clinical. We will discuss the candidates’ immune protection and safety profile and explore the best technological avenues that support high-scale manufacturing and equitable access. Opportunities for synergising research across the development pipeline will be explored, together with current challenges and opportunities relating to animal models, immunological correlates of protection, disease enhancement, immunisation programmes, and personal and social factors affecting access to vaccines. The role of timely data sharing and coordination mechanism in preparation of large-scale trials will be addressed.

2. Therapeutics

Prevention and treatment are essential and complementary components of any strategy to control the COVID-19 pandemic. This session will look at the state of play of the different therapeutic avenues under investigation throughout the development pipeline. Opportunities for synergising research for development will be explored, as well as for pursuing coherence in the large-scale clinical trials across the world. The role of timely data sharing, as well as experienced barriers for the timely implementation of research will be addressed.

3. Social Science

In the absence of medical countermeasures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, governments and communities have relied on public health, social and policy measures to control the disease worldwide. The present crisis has once again highlighted the value of social sciences research in informing preparedness, response and recovery. Building on recent efforts to more fully integrate social science evidence into the core of epidemic response, this session will explore synergies among a vast COVID-19 research portfolio and will consider further opportunities to grow social sciences networks and strengthen mechanisms to integrate research evidence into operations, planning and recovery. In particular, the session will examine the themes of:

- COVID-19, societies and the future
- Epidemics and governance
- Equity, Indigenous communities and other marginalized populations

- Methodological challenges.

4. Preparing for a second wave; understand transmission and how to stop it.

All countries will have to deal the prospect of a second wave of COVID-19. Faced with the unknown, we need to build on what we have learnt about COVID-19 to better prepare for a potential second wave. This session will specifically cover the following questions:

- As the biology of the virus and disease becomes more defined, how does this impact on transmission, and how do we apply these learnings to our preparedness and response?
- What infection prevention control methodologies have worked best, and where do we continue to have gaps in our knowledge on what to implement, and at scale?
- What challenges remain in our diagnostic capability that if addressed would improve our ability to detect, prevent and monitor a second wave or recurrent upsurges?

Panel discussion – July 23

A summary session will be held on July 23 where the co-chairs from each thematic area will feedback to the wider GloPID-R community and partners, and discuss key findings and action items for researcher, GloPID-R members and other key stakeholders. The panel discussion will be a broad discussion, which considers the overall strategy and goals for ending the pandemic and where should research focus and what can GloPID-R funders do. The discussions will integrate the conclusions of the WHO meetings July 1 & 2. We will also discuss issues that are emerging in the next phase of pandemic, including long-term health issues of COVID-19, overlap of COVID with HIV-1 and TB in endemic areas, overlap of COVID-19 with influenza season and incorporating lessons into next phase of this pandemic and preparedness for future ones.

Logistical considerations

The meeting will be held on Zoom for Chairs and Presenters while other attendees will connect on live stream. Each of the 31 GloPID-R Members and Observers will list its representatives and its project leaders (some of these latter could be asked to be present) to attend. Careful consideration will also be given to geographical and gender representation.

Expected outcomes and next steps

Each of the sessions outlined above will be recorded and made publicly available via the GloPID R website. A brief meeting report will be released to capture key conclusions of each thematic discussion. The [Tracker](#) developed by UKCDR and GloPID-R will be used to capture any new information about COVID-19 funded projects. To enhance likelihood of longer-term collaboration LOPs will be shared and specialty summits will be considered. The Chair & CoChairs of GloPID R will meet afterwards to discuss the conclusions of the meeting and define actionable steps for the funders to consider.