

FIND signs \$14.5M grant with UNITAID for rapid TB diagnosis

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Activities funded by Unitaid will run for 3 years in Brazil, China, Georgia, India and South Africa



The Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) has announced that a new \$14.5 million grant has been signed with Unitaid to evaluate the use of next-generation sequencing (NGS) for diagnosis of drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

The grant agreement was signed by FIND CEO Catharina Boehme and Unitaid Executive Director Lelio Marmora, at the Global Health Campus in Geneva, Switzerland.

The project – dubbed Seq&Treat (bringing next-generation TB care to underserved communities) – will start in October 2019.

With implementation across Brazil, China, Georgia, India and South Africa over a period of 3 years, it will enable the introduction and global adoption of commercial, targeted NGS solutions for affordable, scalable and rapid TB drug susceptibility testing (DST).

The Seq&Treat project seeks to generate clinical evidence to support World Health Organization (WHO) global guidance for the use of targeted NGS for DR-TB diagnosis, establish a WHO global clinical knowledgebase, evaluate proof-of-principle delivery models for integrating targeted NGS into existing diagnostic work streams, and facilitate inclusion of recommended NGS solutions into global procurement mechanisms and adoption by LMICs.

“The implementation of sequencing for patient care in LMICs has been limited due to perceptions of high cost, technical and workflow complexity, and lack of infrastructure on both supply and demand sides,” said Catharina Boehme, CEO of FIND. “This significant investment from Unitaid will enable us to challenge these ideas by demonstrating sustainable and scalable sequencing models in high-burden TB countries.”

“New technologies offer a phenomenal pathway to test and treat more people for tuberculosis, including drug-resistant TB, while strengthening health systems,” said Lelio Marmora, Executive Director of Unitaid.

Seq&Treat will enable rapid diagnosis and comprehensive treatment guidance in the short term, as well as catalyze an eventual decrease in the transmission of DR-TB, and reductions in DR-TB incidence and prevalence.