

New AREF-Roche and Genentech Fellowship to Support the Next Generation of Health Researchers in Africa.

- New AREF-Roche and Genentech Fellowship Program set to support emerging African scientists to become leaders in their fields.
- The selected fellows will complete a nine-month immersive fellowship placement in world-leading laboratories and receive extensive training and mentoring.
- The program will support African scientists in tackling prevailing health challenges across the continent.

United Kingdom, 17 October 2023 – Roche and the Africa Research Excellence Fund (AREF) have launched a new fellowship program to support the next generation of African scientists. The AREF-Roche and Genentech Fellowship Program will support three emerging African scientists to become leaders in the fields of clinical pharmacology, pathology and human genetics. The selected fellows will spend nine months at world-leading Genentech and Roche laboratories to develop and refine their research ideas, engage with a global network of mentors, and build their capacity to address prevailing health challenges across Africa.

With Research and Development (R&D) investment in Africa being largely underfunded at just 1.3% of the global R&D spend[1] and only 2.5% of clinical trials[2] being conducted in Africa, this fellowship program aims to equip emerging African scientists to become health research leaders. This is a critical step in the right direction to accelerate Africa's health research output and reduce the continent's disproportionate disease burden.

"African scientists should be at the forefront of producing research that addresses Africa's unique health needs. That's why AREF is committed to nurturing and supporting emerging health researchers with fellowship placements at globally reputable research centres, to acquire advanced research skills, develop mentorship relations and collaborate with an international network of scientists. We are thrilled to offer this new fellowship and to equip the talented fellows to become independent researchers and influential leaders, capable of tackling Africa's public health challenges," said Professor Sir Tumani Corrah, Founder and President of AREF. Since 2015, AREF has invested in nurturing, mentoring, and supporting a community of researchers across Africa to become research experts and leaders, capable of tackling African and global health challenges. The Fund has supported over 600 researchers from 41 countries across Africa, setting them on the path to lead their own research teams within the continent and secure additional funding.

Notes for Editors

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Assistant Prof. Leopold Tientacheu. courtesy of AREF

Roche has been conducting clinical trials in Africa for over 25 years, and continues to collaborate with partners to catalyze and accelerate genomic science across the continent. "At Roche, we are committed to supporting the development of a strong ecosystem for African science. This fellowship will contribute to the need for capacity building, as defined by African researchers and their institutions, and help equip a new generation of African scientists leading genomics, clinical pharmacology and pathology science and innovation on the continent," said Maturin Tchoumi, Area Head, Africa, Roche.

The AREF- Roche and Genentech Fellowship Program applications will launch this November and the fellowship program will kick off in July 2024, with a nine-month fellowship placement in some of the world's leading laboratories. It will conclude with an opportunity for the talented fellows to win seed funding to further their research leadership and tackle critical health challenges in Africa.

Africa Research Excellence Fund

The Africa Research Excellence Fund (AREF) was founded by Professor Sir Tumani Corrah KBE in 2015.

Professor Corrah founded AREF to support the careers of the new generation of African researchers, giving them the stepping stones needed to become outstanding research leaders in their respective fields, ensuring that talent is retained in Africa to address the continent's unique health research needs.

AREF's vision is of an inspired, committed, and talented community of researchers in Africa leading world-class research and participating equitably in international research endeavors for health and wellbeing.

References

1. UNESCO science report: towards 2030
2. Patra, Swapan Kumar. The Conversation, "Africa hosts very few clinical trials. Why this is bad for innovation" (2018)