FIND AND UK GOVERNMENT SPEARHEAD NEW DIAGNOSTICS INITIATIVES TO FIGHT ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE; FIND LAUNCHES DIAGNOSTICS USE ACCELERATOR

- Diagnostics Use Accelerator, supported by catalytic funding from the UK and Swiss governments, will speed up data generation to inform policy makers on the best real world diagnostic solutions and drive positive behaviour change; Professor Piero Olliaro joins FIND to lead this initiative
- Expanded FIND partnership with the UK government underlines UK commitment to tackling the global threat of AMR by supporting development of companion diagnostics for new gonorrhoea drugs, and evaluating technologies to protect the public from substandard and falsified antibiotics
- Announcements made at the second AMR Call to Action meeting in Ghana

Geneva, Switzerland – 19 November 2018 – The Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) announced today, at the Call to Action on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) in Ghana, the launch of a Diagnostics (Dx) Use Accelerator as a central element of the organization’s strategy to fight AMR and help achieve universal health coverage (UHC), with catalytic funding from the UK and Swiss governments. Underlining the UK’s continued commitment to combatting the global threat of AMR, the UK government’s Global Antimicrobial Resistance Innovation Fund (GAMRIF), part of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), is also providing support to FIND for the research and development for high-priority companion diagnostics for urgently needed gonorrhoea drugs; and together with the Fleming Fund, a new grant focussing on detection of substandard and falsified antibiotics that contribute to the development of resistance.

It is estimated that 700,000 deaths each year are caused by drug-resistant pathogens; by 2050, if no actions are taken to contain AMR, that figure is predicted to rise to 10 million deaths per year. The economic and human cost of this global health threat will fall disproportionately on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Accessible, accurate, and affordable diagnostics play a vital role in strengthening primary healthcare – and thus in supporting UHC and the prevention of AMR.

The Dx Use Accelerator is a demonstration study platform that will stimulate research and speed up data generation from in-country projects, to inform policy makers about diagnostic solutions and drive behaviour change in both healthcare providers and patients. To lead this work, Professor Piero Olliaro has joined FIND as Head of AMR Diagnostics Use Accelerator. Professor Olliaro most recently led intervention and implementation research at the World Health Organization Special Programme for Research & Training in Tropical Diseases (WHO TDR).

The UK government, through the Department for International Development (DFID), continues to be a major donor to FIND, and together with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), is funding the first wave of Dx Use Accelerator activities. These will focus on improving targeted antibiotic treatment of

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people presenting in outpatient settings with fever, through studies that integrate commercially available point-of-care diagnostic tools and decision-aid tools coupled with behaviour-change initiatives. Fever was chosen as the priority for this first wave because in LMICs a high proportion of febrile patients who have a negative malaria test are likely to receive antibiotics “just in case”, even though only a very small percentage actually need antibiotics, as the majority of these cases are likely self-limiting viral illnesses.

Building on GAMRIF’s ongoing partnership with FIND that focusses on connectivity for AMR diagnostics, GAMRIF is further boosting FIND’s AMR work in the areas of antibiotic stewardship and substandard and falsified antibiotics – the latter in partnership with the Fleming Fund.

Drug-resistant gonorrhoea is an urgent public health issue; new gonorrhoea antibiotics are in development, but they will require stewardship to ensure their efficacy is preserved as long as possible. FIND will facilitate the development and rapid feasibility assessment of high-priority companion diagnostics needed to support delivery and roll out of these new drugs, particularly through the differentiation of gonorrhoea and chlamydia infections.

Substandard and falsified (SF) antibiotics play an important role in AMR, as their use allows pathogens to be exposed to ineffective doses of treatments, enabling the development of resistance. FIND will evaluate the potential of three different diagnostic technologies to detect SF antibiotics, supporting ongoing work at the World Health Organization (WHO) to inform future policy. Country-level information will be gathered to support development and deployment of tailored regulatory and implementation strategies to combat SF antibiotics that put lives at risk, and also contribute to AMR.

“AMR is a reality that can turn back the clock on medical advances, and diagnostics are an essential component in halting and preventing its spread in numerous diseases,” said Dr Catharina Boehme, CEO of FIND. “The Dx Use Accelerator is a pathfinder for generating evidence that will inform policy change and lay the groundwork for a robust route to uptake, to impact patient care globally. Protecting existing and new therapies by supporting appropriate prescribing, and ensuring the authenticity of available drugs, are both high-priority areas in which diagnostics have a significant role to play.”

Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Dame Sally Davies said: “Superbugs are a global threat, killing hundreds of thousands of people across the world each year – with the highest burden in low and middle-income countries. I am proud to announce the boosting of the UK government’s investment in FIND to develop diagnostics, which will help us speed up efforts to prescribe antibiotics only when needed and root out fake or poor-quality medicines.”

The Call to Action on AMR taking place on 19–20 November 2018 in Ghana is the second of its kind, hosted by the Wellcome Trust together with the Ghanaian, Thai and UK governments, the World Bank, and the UN Foundation. FIND is an official partner of the meeting.

Dx Use Accelerator first-wave activities are funded by UK aid from the UK government through the Department for International Development (DFID), and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The gonorrhoea grant is supported by the UK government’s Global Antimicrobial Resistance Innovation Fund (GAMRIF); the substandard and falsified grant is supported by the Fleming Fund. Both GAMRIF and the Fleming Fund are part of the UK Department of Health and Social Care.

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About FIND
FIND is a global non-profit organization that drives innovation in the development and delivery of diagnostics to combat major diseases affecting the world's poorest populations. Our work bridges R&D to access, overcoming scientific barriers to technology development; generating evidence for regulators and policy-makers; addressing market failures; and enabling accelerated uptake and access to diagnostics in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Since 2003, we have been instrumental in the delivery of 21 new diagnostic tools used in 150 LMICs. Over 38 million FIND-supported products have been provided to our target markets since the start of 2015. A WHO Collaborating Centre, we work with more than 200 academic, industry, governmental, and civil society partners worldwide, on over 70 active projects that cross six priority disease areas. FIND is committed to a future in which diagnostics underpin treatment decisions and provide the foundation for disease surveillance, control and prevention. For more information, please visit www.finddx.org

About DFID
The Department for International Development (DFID) leads the UK’s work to end extreme poverty. We are tackling the global challenges of our time including poverty and disease, mass migration, insecurity and conflict. Our work is building a safer, healthier, more prosperous world for people in developing countries and in the UK too. DFID is a ministerial department, supported by 3 agencies and public bodies. Read more about what we do

About DHSC
The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) is the UK government department which is responsible for helping people to live more independent, healthier lives for longer. The partnership with FIND is part of two projects run by DHSC, the Global AMR Innovation Fund (GAMRIF) and the Fleming Fund. GAMRIF was established to provide seed funding for innovative research and development, specifically in neglected and underinvested areas, to address the threat of AMR. GAMRIF is a UK aid investment, which means all projects funded must support research primarily and directly for the benefit of people in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The Fund takes a ‘One Health’ approach, seeking to invest in potential solutions to reduce the threat of AMR in humans, livestock and the environment. The Fund seeks to leverage additional global funding through interaction with international government bodies, public–private partnerships, product development partnerships, global funding mechanisms and global fora. The Fleming Fund represents a large scale investment from UK aid in supporting low and middle income countries to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR) through a One Health approach. The Fleming Fund supports countries to improve their AMR surveillance capacity so that countries can generate and use data to change policy and practice and better tackle AMR. The Fleming Fund is led by DHSC in partnership with a wide range of delivery partners and an independent technical advisory group.

Media contacts

DHSC: Laura Walklett, Communications Manager
T: +44 20 7210 5199
M: +44 7787 83 6432
Laura.Walklett@dh.gsi.gov.uk

FIND: Sarah-Jane Loveday, Head of Communications
T: +41 (0) 22 710 27 88
M: +41 (0) 79 431 62 44
media@finddx.org

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