

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH (ICER)

During the initial five year period of the ICER (between 2003-2008), apart from renovating and equipping the laboratory building, a modern IT backbone was established that enabled a secure computer network with both high speed connections to the NIH's online resources and software for clinical and basic laboratory research. Videoconferencing was put into place that allowed sharing of research presentations and interactive training. Furthermore, redundant systems (from air handling to backup generators) and preventative maintenance for equipment and the infrastructure were built.

Because training was always an integral part of the ICER concept, there were a large number of on-the-ground training forums as well as short term training opportunities for collaborating members of the TRC staff. Training sessions were based on the perceived needs of the TRC staff and included courses in GCP and GLP, biostatistics, biosafety, good accounting practices, clinical trials design, antiretroviral therapy, and HIV care among others. Three to six month laboratory based collaborative research was undertaken by a number of staff and students at the TRC that included work on multicolor flow cytometry in HIV, pharmacokinetics, human genetics of extrapulmonary TB, proteomics of mycobacteria, pulmonary immunology, advanced clinical microbiology in HIV, and mycobacterial genetics. Shorter term training was made available to several members of the clinical research staff in the United States, South Africa and in Uganda.

Both basic and clinically-relevant, a great effort was placed on both establishing clinical research protocols and making inroads into the understanding of the pathogenesis of lymphatic filariasis, HIV, and TB.

Based on these activities and achievements, the ICER programme has been extended for a further period of 5 years (2008-2013). The Joint statement extending this agreement was signed by the Hon'ble Minister for Health and Welfare, Government of India and the US Secretary for Health on the sidelines of the World Health Assembly meeting.