Terms of Reference

Onchocerciasis Technical Advisory Subgroup (OTS)

Working Group on Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (WG-MER)

WHO Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Neglected Tropical Diseases (STAG-NTD)

The Onchocerciasis Technical Advisory Subgroup (OTS) will advise the WHO’s Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Neglected Tropical Disease (STAG-NTD) through the Working Group on Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (WG-MER) on matters relevant to the elimination of onchocerciasis.

In 2016 WHO released the Guidelines for Stopping Mass Drug Administration and Verification of the Elimination of Human Onchocerciasis. These guidelines need to be augmented with strategies for the performance of surveillance prior to stopping MDA, technical aspects of the implementation of the guidelines for stopping MDA, and for post-treatment and post-elimination surveillance.

Additionally, there is a need to develop strategies for the implementation of MDA in areas with co-endemic loiasis and the integration of monitoring and evaluation with activities for lymphatic filariasis. Finally, there is a need to develop a programme managers’ manual in order to assist the advancement of programme operations in the absence of formal guidelines.

Functions

The OTS shall have the following functions:

1. To review the current and evolving scientific evidence on the elimination of onchocerciasis and based on that evidence make recommendations for consideration by the STAG-NTD’s WG-MER and/or WHO guidelines and policy development groups;

2. To review the gaps in the currently available evidence base and recommend priorities for research to address issues relevant to the elimination of onchocerciasis;

3. To provide expert consensus when there is insufficient evidence available for recommendations, so that onchocerciasis programmes can move forward with common strategies or with operational research whose aim it is to generate the evidence to support or refute the consensus recommendation;

4. To provide recommendations for consideration by the STAG-NTD’s WG-MER and/or WHO guidelines and policy development groups on the integration and/or coordination of onchocerciasis-related M&E activities with those of lymphatic filariasis and other preventive chemotherapy diseases and loiasis.

Composition

1. The OTS shall have up to 10 members, who shall serve in their personal capacities to represent the broad range of disciplines relevant to the onchocerciasis elimination activities of the WHO Global NTD Programme. In the selection of the members, consideration will be given to attaining an adequate technical distribution of expertise, geographical representation and gender balance. Members will be drawn from WHO Expert Panels when possible.
2. Members of the OTS, including the Chairperson, shall be selected and appointed by WHO/UCN/NTD. The Chairperson's duties include the following:
   - to chair the meeting of the OTS;
   - to liaise with the WHO Secretariat between meetings

3. Members of the OTS, including the Chairperson, shall be appointed to serve for a period of 2 years and shall be eligible for reappointment for one additional term only. Their appointment and/or designation as Chairperson may be terminated at any time upon their request or by WHO if WHO's interest so requires or as otherwise specified in the TOR and letter of appointment.

4. Representatives from inter-governmental organizations, as well as nongovernmental organizations and private universities, may be invited by WHO to participate in OTS meetings as observers or experts in direct relation to a specific agenda item. Upon invitation of the Chair, they may present the views and policies of their organizations and contribute to the discussions in the OTS. They will not participate in the process of adopting the final decisions or recommendations of the OTS.

5. Members must respect the impartiality and independence required of WHO. In performing their work in their capacity as OTS members, they may not seek or accept instructions from any Government or from any authority external to the Organization. They must be free of real, potential or apparent conflict of interest. To this end, proposed members and members will be required to complete a declaration of interest form upon their appointment. Continuation of their appointment will be subject to the evaluation of completed forms by the WHO Secretariat to determine that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

Operation

1. The OTS shall meet one to two times each year, with regular teleconferences and videoconferences occurring up to once monthly. WHO shall provide any necessary scientific, technical and other support for the OTS. WHO may convene additional meetings, including through teleconferences and videoconferences, on an ad hoc basis.

2. Reports of each meeting and the work of the OTS will be presented to the STAG-NTD’s WG-MER. Key decisions reached during telephone conferences will be included in the following meeting report. All recommendations from the OTS are advisory to WHO STAG-NTD and its WG-MER, which retains full control over any subsequent decisions or actions regarding any proposals, policy issues or other matters considered by the OTS. All reports emanating from the work of OTS will be internal to the WHO STAG-NTD and WHO’s Global NTD Programme.

3. Information and documentation to which members may gain access in performing OTS related activities will be considered as confidential and proprietary to WHO and/or parties collaborating with WHO. OTS members shall not purport to speak on behalf of, or represent, the OTS or WHO to any third party. All proposed members will be required to sign an appropriate confidentiality undertaking and provisions on ownership.