South African Medical Research Council – Global Alliance for Chronic Disease

Call for Research Proposals: Prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes

Call focus: Implementation Science Research

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Background
In the past twenty years the global death rate from diabetes has doubled and the World Health Organization (WHO) is predicting that this will increase by two thirds by 2030. It is currently estimated that 347 million people worldwide suffer from diabetes, with more than 80% living in low- and middle-income countries. Of those suffering from diabetes around the world, type 2 comprises 90% of this population. Halting the rise in prevalence of diabetes has been identified as one of the WHO non-communicable diseases (NCD) global voluntary targets to be met by Member States by 2025.

With the burden of this chronic non-communicable disease ever-increasing, the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) partnership has agreed to launch a call for proposals on the prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes. Particular focus is placed on implementation and intervention research in low- and middle-income countries and involving indigenous populations in Canada and Australia. The emphasis of this initiative is on existing approaches to prevention and control of type 2 diabetes rather than development of new treatments.
This request for applications is issued under the auspices of the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD). Members of the GACD include the:

- Australian National Health and Medical Research Council
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences
- Research & Innovation Directorate General of the European Commission
- Indian Council of Medical Research
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the Fogarty International Centre and the National Institute of Mental Health of the National Institutes of Health in the United States of America
- UK Medical Research Council
- South African Medical Research Council

South African Medical Research Council
The mandate of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) is legislated in terms of the SAMRC Act 58, 1991 (as amended): ‘the objects of the SAMRC are, through research, development and technology transfer, to promote the improvement of the health and quality of life of the population of the Republic, and to perform such functions as maybe assigned to the SAMRC by or under this Act’. The SAMRC’s research mandate is guided by the SAMRC Act, the country’s health needs and priorities. SAMRC research aims to promote the improvement of the health and quality of life of all who live in South Africa. In this regard, the SAMRC works with the Department of Health, the Department of Science & Technology, Medical Schools, Universities, research institutes and international collaborators.

The Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases
The Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases consisting of the major public funded health research organizations of the world was established in 2009. The purpose of the Alliance is to support research priorities and coordinate research efforts in non-communicable diseases (NCD), a growing health crisis globally. The Members of the GACD include the Medical Research Councils (MRC) of the United Kingdom and South Africa; the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia (NHMRC); the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR); The United States
of America’s National Institutes of Health (specifically its National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), the Fogarty International Centre (FIC), the National Cancer Institute, and the National Institute of Mental Health), the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences (CAMS), the European Commission (EC) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Aim
The aim of this call is to fund projects that will generate new knowledge on interventions and their implementation for the prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC), as defined by The World Bank.

The GACD partnership is therefore looking for projects that focus on the guiding principles of:

- Reducing health inequalities and inequities in the prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes in both a local and global context.
- Pursuing knowledge translation and exchange approaches that are designed to maximize the public health benefits of research findings within different health contexts.
- Providing evidence to inform local health service providers, policy and decision makers on the effective scaling up of the interventions at the local, national and regional level.

Through the launch of a global call, the GACD aims to develop a global network of researchers that can enhance the cumulative learning across the individual projects, and work towards understanding how socio-economic, cultural, geopolitical and policy contexts have influenced results and how findings might be adapted and applied in different settings. The funded researchers will form part of a Joint Technical Steering Committee which will meet annually to discuss their research and share information in order to develop approaches to standardise data collection, and wherever feasible to use these standardised approaches in their respective projects.

Scope
Researchers responding to this call can focus on a wide range of prevention and/or treatment strategies. This might include programmes addressing (one or combinations of):
Lifestyle and behavioural issues such as what changes can be made to provide an environment that supports and promotes better health. This might include community-wide approaches, or other strategies targeting individuals at high risk. For instance, population prevention strategies designed to address unhealthy diets and physical inactivity as risk factors for diabetes.

Structural interventions or policies designed to promote improved health outcomes. For instance, evaluating the contribution of public policies to diabetes prevention efforts, or monitoring the potential effects of such policies if adopted and implemented.

Delivery of relevant health care and health interventions.

Approaches to implementing accessibility of or adherence to, pharmaceutical, nutritional or other promising or proven interventions.

This call is focused on implementation research, to examine what works, for whom and under what contextual circumstances, and how interventions can be adapted and scaled up in ways that are accessible and equitable.

Proposals can address prevention or treatment of specific complications of type 2 diabetes. Projects addressing gestational diabetes are within the scope of this call. Applicants must justify clearly in their proposal why their chosen topic fits within the aims and scope of this call.

Projects can focus on specific societal groups but a clear justification should be provided as to why the group has been chosen and how the choice will assist the funders in delivering their aim to address health inequities at a local and/or global level.

This call is focused on implementation research into interventions for prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes that are applicable in low resource settings. However, in some settings, the project may need to incorporate work to establish baseline data on prevalence of diabetes and its risk factors to evaluate the impact of the intervention. Research into these aspects can be incorporated into the proposed work if it does not duplicate existing evidence available.

Researchers with ideas that do not fall within these categories are encouraged to contact their relevant funding agency to discuss whether their research idea fits the aims and scope of the call.

The following types of projects DO NOT fall within the scope of this call:

- Replication of effectiveness studies and clinical trials testing the efficacy or effectiveness of new or established pharmacological agents (or
combination of agents) which have wider effects than those relating to type 2 diabetes.

- Aetiological work, mechanistic, or epidemiological research, which is not part of a wider study to develop implementation science approaches.
- Phase I or Phase IIa trials.

Assessment Criteria
The SAMRC has a one-step submission and review process. The SAMRC and where applicable with its GACD co-funding member will request letters of intent (LoI) to be reviewed by an expert scientific review panel. Letters of intent will be assessed and scored by a mutually agreed scoring system and funding criteria of some of the GACD co-funding agencies. Application information will be shared between the co-funding agencies in order to prevent duplication. The successful applicants in the LoI stage will be invited to submit a full application. The expert panel’s decision is final and it will not engage in an appeal process.

Applications for grants will be assessed against the following criteria:

i. Relevance and Quality of Project
ii. Quality of Team
iii. Project Implementation Plans
iv. Potential Impact

Criterion One: Relevance and Quality of Project

- Proposal fits well within the objectives and scientific remit set out in the call.
- Strong scientific rationale for pursuing the questions or gaps in knowledge that are being addressed. Success is likely to lead to significant new understanding that is relevant for scientists and knowledge users. Applicants are aware of complementary research underway elsewhere.
- Proposed methods are appropriate and feasible to answer the study question(s) and are considered best in the international field of implementation science research (e.g. mixed methods designs, in-depth comparative case studies, pragmatic cluster RCTs, and natural experiments).
- Proposal is innovative (applicants may want to refer to the document on integrated innovation - http://www.grandchallenges.ca/files/news/integratedInnovation.pdf)
- Intervention has been adequately described.
Criterion Two: Quality of Team

- Multidisciplinary team members have established a high quality track record in related fields of proposed research and pertinent to implementation science and they have the right balance of expertise given goal(s) of research project.
- Each country participating in the project must have a named principal investigator.
- Early career investigators are part of the team and strong training plan for research capacity-building is included.
- Demonstrated engagement of decision-makers.

Criterion Three: Project Implementation Plans

- Major scientific, technical or organisational challenges been identified, and realistic plans to tackle these are outlined.
- Proposed intervention strategies are relevant to the socio-political, cultural, legislative and economic contexts of the study settings.
- Inequities and equity gaps including gender have been taken into account in the design of an implementation strategy.
- Objective measures of evaluation have been included. Programmes that are able to track long-term clinical, policy and/or health system outcomes are strongly encouraged.

Criterion Four: Potential Impact

- Project demonstrates alignment with international and/or national commitments to halt the rise in prevalence of type 2 diabetes.
- Project appropriately leverages existing programmes and platforms (e.g. research, data, and delivery platforms).
- The potential for scaling up intervention strategies has been considered. For example, applicants could address affordability for users and the financial implications for implementing organisations and funders or might assess scalability to various socio-political contexts.
- Projects are designed to inform practice, programmes and/or policy development and/or refinements.
- Describe how health economic dimensions will be assessed such as cost-effectiveness of proposed intervention and its scalability.

All applications must describe:

- System barriers (health care and other) to treatment and prevention of type 2 diabetes and how these can be addressed.
- System facilitators and how these will be leveraged.
How decision-makers and other knowledge users will be engaged in the project.

An implementation research component - implementation should involve some strategies with demonstrated efficacy and/or effectiveness and may also include the development of new strategies.

An assessment of equity and gender gaps and the needs of vulnerable populations in treatment and prevention of type 2 diabetes.

The multidisciplinary composition of research teams.

An appropriate plan for knowledge translation and exchange as a component of the project.

Training plan for research capacity building.

All funded projects must comply with appropriate local and national regulatory and ethical requirements.

Funding

One of the conditions of co-funding are that South African research teams applying for funding are expected to include Principal Investigator(s) (PI) from participating GACD members from high-income countries. Applicants are encouraged to visit the websites of the GACD funding agencies as well as the GACD website for specification of the individual participating agencies.

South African PI(s) and the co-applicants from participating GACD members who wish to apply for funding should submit a LoI to the agencies in which the PI(s) of the high-income countries reside. If invited, after the LoI stage, the South African PI(s) must submit a full proposal to the SAMRC and the GACD co-funder for an expert panel to review the full proposal.

No other funding can be combined with the GACD call. If the PI leaves the service from his/her Institution he must immediately inform the GACD secretariat and funding agencies.

The budgets of the applications should be realistic and ensure that the potential outcomes of the projects could be reached within the proposed timelines. The period of funding will not exceed 5 years (dependant on co-funding agency). The number of projects to be funded and the total amount requested per application will be determined by its scientific merit as assessed by the joint GACD expert review panel.
Co-funding links: (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia, Medical Research Council United Kingdom, European Commission (Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2014-2015 in the area of health, demographic change and wellbeing), National Institutes of Health (Interest in Type 2 Diabetes Research Topics in PAR-13-054 Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health (R21) to support the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) Initiative (NOT-TW-14-003)), (Interest in Type 2 Diabetes Research Topics in PAR-13-056 Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health (R03) to support the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) Initiative (NOT-TW-14-004)), (Interest in Type 2 Diabetes Research Topics in PAR-13-055 Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health (R01) to support the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) Initiative).

Eligibility
South African applicants should have a South African identity number and in a permanent working position at a South African Institution.

It is advisable that the South African PI(s) include co-investigators from his/her own Institution. If the PI for one or other reason cannot complete the study the co-investigator can step-in to complete the study within the timelines agreed to.

Applications with only South African researchers will not be considered for funding under the current call for proposals.

Process of Applying
First step
The SAMRC application(s) is a one step process. To qualify for a possible co-funding from member GACD agencies the South African applicants must submit a LoI with the PI(s) from the appropriate GACD agency of a high-income country. A copy of LoI should be submitted to the SAMRC.

The deadline for submission will be according to the respective agencies deadlines as indicate on their respective websites.

Second step
The PI(s) from the successful applications which are selected by the joint GACD expert review panel will be invited to submit a full proposal.
Timelines
The applicants must adhere to co-funding agency’s timelines (See links below).

Deadline for outline/proposal stage: **End of January 2014.**

Deadline for full application: **April/May 2014.**

Notification of successful applicants: **October/November 2014.**

**Note:** Please refer to funding partners’ timelines: (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia, Medical Research Council United Kingdom, European Commission (Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2014-2015 in the area of health, demographic change and wellbeing), National Institutes of Health (Interest in Type 2 Diabetes Research Topics in PAR-13-054 Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health (R21) to support the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) Initiative (NOT-TW-14-003)), (Interest in Type 2 Diabetes Research Topics in PAR-13-056 Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health (R03) to support the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) Initiative (NOT-TW-14-004)), (Interest in Type 2 Diabetes Research Topics in PAR-13-055 Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health (R01) to support the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) Initiative)).

Contact details
Enquiries should be directed to the following e-mail address: samrcgacd@mrc.ac.za