

# THE UNION NORTH AMERICA REGION IN 2016



*The medical staff at a clinic in Mongolia treat patients for MDR-TB. The clinic is part of the STREAM clinical trial.*

*Photo: Dasha Burns*

## THE UNION BEGINS STREAM STAGE 2 CLINICAL STUDY

The STREAM trial is a multi-centre international, randomised controlled trial sponsored by The Union and its North American affiliate Vital Strategies, to evaluate standardised treatment regimens of anti-tuberculosis drugs for patients with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB).

STREAM Stage 2 aims to evaluate simpler and shorter treatment regimens for patients with MDR-TB. The current treatment involves a complex regimen that can last up to 24 months, posing a significant burden for patients and health systems.

This study includes bedaquiline, produced by Janssen Pharmaceuticals and is the first phase III clinical trial to test the effectiveness of bedaquiline within a shortened MDR-TB treatment regimen. The Union has amended the original STREAM study protocol to include an all-oral nine-month regimen and a six-month regimen.

STREAM is the first clinical trial of its kind, and the trial has now recruited patients in Mongolia, Ethiopia, and South Africa. “We hope this study will mark a crucial turning point in the fight against drug-resistant TB,” said I.D. Rusen, Senior Vice

President for Research and Development and Union lead for the STREAM Trial. “If successful, the results from Stage 2 will provide further evidence for adopting shorter and more simplified treatment regimens – an essential step in the worldwide effort to confront MDR-TB.”

### VITAL STRATEGIES

In 2016, The Union North America united with World Lung Foundation to form Vital Strategies, which remains an affiliate of The Union. Vital Strategies was created to give a broader scope to the work of this office, enabling us to improve public health for more people worldwide.

# FROM EVIDENCE TO PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

For nearly 100 years The Union has drawn together the best scientific evidence and expertise to address the most pressing public health challenges affecting people living in poverty around the world. Know. Share. Act.

## KNOW.

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- The Union, supported by USAID and in partnership with the Brazilian Network of Tuberculosis Research, released a STREAM Community Engagement Plan, designed to support global communities undertaking clinical trials and TB research. The plan is available from the TREAT TB website.

## SHARE.

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- The Union's Training and Education department held over 60 courses and has trained over 1,200 public health professionals working for governments and NGOs of 54 different countries in clinical and operational TB and MDR-TB management, tobacco control, project management, networking and partnerships, budgeting and finance, strategic health communications, monitoring and evaluation, supply chain management and leading management teams.
- The fourth STREAM Investigators' Meeting was held in New York City, and 28 researchers from STREAM Stage 1 and Stage 2 sites were able to share and receive updated information about the trial.
- The 20th Conference of The Union North America Region was held in Colorado, USA. The agenda included wide-ranging clinical, scientific and programmatic topics. Particular focus was given to paediatric tuberculosis, drug-resistant TB, TB genomics in public health practice and exploring various present day social issues, such as the migration of unaccompanied minors and homelessness.

## ACT.

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- The Union's Scientific Director, Dr Paula I Fujiwara, provided briefings to the US Senate on the need to maintain funding for TB programmes. Dr Fujiwara spoke about the potential consequences of President Obama's proposal to slash 2017 funding for TB by 19 percent, or roughly US\$ 45 million. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new data showing that TB is on the rise throughout the US for the first time in over two decades.