

**Press release****Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf****Susanne Dopheide**

10/14/2013

<http://idw-online.de/en/news556308>Cooperation agreements, Organisational matters  
Medicine  
transregional, national**Ethiopian-German Cooperation: Opening of the W. Hirsch Institute of Tropical Medicine**

**14.10.2013 – On October 16th, the W. Hirsch Institute of Tropical Medicine will be opened on the campus of the Adama University in Asella, situated about 90 km south-east of Ethiopia's capital Addis Abeba. The institute will provide the framework for high-quality medical and scientific education and clinical research. The aim is to establish a long-term cooperation between the Adama Science and Technology University, the Heinrich-Heine University of Düsseldorf and the Department for Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Infectious Diseases under the management of Prof. Dr. Dieter Häussinger.**

The agreement to establish the W. Hirsch Institute as a branch of this hospital was signed in June 2010. "This new institute is an ambitious and important project in terms of research and education in tropical medicine. With the results of the research we also hope to support healthcare of infectious diseases in Ethiopia", said Prof. Dr. Dieter Häussinger about the new establishment.

The facility and the operation of the institute will be primarily financed by donations; Düsseldorf-based entrepreneur Wolfgang Hirsch made a generous private donation which initiated the project. According to the local needs and the key expertise of the German hospital, the training and research activities are focused on infectious diseases and hepatology (study of the liver). This also includes the most prevalent infectious diseases in the local area, such as HIV infections, tuberculosis, viral hepatitis and parasitic infections.

First projects that were initiated by the partners were based on urgent medical problems in the region: A hospital partnership project focusing on the impact of infectious diseases on mother-and-child health was approved for initially two years by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development within the scope of the ESTHER initiative (Ensemble pour une Solidarité Thérapeutique Hospitalière en Réseau) of the Society for International Cooperation (GIZ). The aim of this project is to educate mothers with regard to infectious diseases with the aim of protecting their newborns. Diseases that affect the health of mothers and their newborns during the perinatal period, such as HIV, hepatitis B, viral infections, puerperal fever and sexually transmitted diseases are of key importance in this project.

In addition, in an on-going pilot study the medical experts are investigating the prevalence and causes of chronic liver diseases in the region. For this study, patients visiting the hospital are systematically examined. This project also incorporates medical training on the diagnoses and management of chronic liver diseases and associated complications. Ethiopia has one of the highest rates of new tuberculosis infections in the world. The development of hepatitis caused by medication to treat tuberculosis represents a major problem in the management of the disease. It complicates treatment in up to a third of the patients, especially in those with existing liver diseases and taking concomitant medicines that harm the liver, e. g. anti-HIV medicines. As a result, the tuberculosis therapy is frequently interrupted, which in turn means that patients have poorer response to the treatment, that the disease progresses or that resistances develop. The study investigates the frequency of such complications, their impact on the success of the therapy and their risk factors. According to recent information, special genetic variants of bile salt transporters could

play an important role.

A specialist from the Düsseldorf Hospital permanently based in Asella has already established a wide range of on-going trainings, transfer of know-how and joint workshops in Asella. The establishment of the institute is an important step in internationalising the Department of Tropical Medicine and Infectious Diseases in Düsseldorf. In future it is also planned to carry out some of the further medical training in tropical medicine of the Düsseldorf physicians in Asella. In return, Ethiopian physicians will also be given the opportunity to take part in further training via an exchange program. The staff members who have been permanently based in Asella since September 2011 ensure continuous education.

Background information about “donations”:

The initial funds to finance the construction of the Institute were donated by Wolfgang Hirsch. Furnishing of the Institute was made possible by the generous support of the Heinz-Ansmann Foundation and the Düsseldorf Rotary Club. Laboratory equipment was donated, amongst others, by the companies Eppendorf and Roche. The operation of the institute has also relied on donations up to now. The Association of Friends and Supporters of the Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf e.V. is the contact point for donations.

(Deutsche Bank AG Düsseldorf, account no. 303 117 6,  
bank sorting code 300 700 10, keyword “Ethiopia Project”)

Contact: Prof. Dr. Dieter Häussinger, Director of the Clinic for Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Infectious Diseases, Düsseldorf University Hospital, Tel.: +49 (0)211 81-16330