

RePORT International Newsletter

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FEATURING TB RICC Biomarkers Trainees



Hands-On Training Inspires Young RePORT Investigators to Become Future Leaders

A conversation with TB RICC Junior Lab Trainees

These trainees “are our ambassadors, our advocates, and our futures.”
Jerry Ellner, Director RICC

The ability for hands-on lab training in the TB field is rare – but to get training and experience with the world’s experts – this a true rarity. However, for five junior RePORT investigators, such a training opportunity came into being only because of the structure of the global RePORT Consortium, its cutting-edge work, and the enthusiasm of more experienced investigators to provide mentorship.

The five trainees were Amsaveni Sivaprakasam (India), Gustiani Salim (Indonesia), JohnCarlo Malabad (Philippines), Prakash Babu (India) and Ruby Anne N. King (Philippines). They were able to visit RePORT networks sites and learn new lab techniques. We got a chance to talk with the trainees during their final visit, in Newark, USA, hosted by Drs. Padmini Salgame and Sheetal Verma.

We asked how the trainees heard about the training and what appealed to them

about it. Dr. Salim mentioned hearing about the training through a RePORT colleague and being excited to get involved given the Indonesia site being involved in a future biomarkers study. The trainees all expressed learning new quality assurance techniques in the lab, both around specimen collection and data clean up and analysis. Additionally, there was hands-on training with new technology, and the use of data visualization. And finally, they appreciated how people in different labs use valuable space and facilities.

The varying environments provided a new perspective on how local work is done. “We really appreciated the one-on-one attention, and seeing the clinical sites, where recruitment takes place and handling very different equipment for us,” expressed Dr. Sivaprakasam. Dr. Malabad continued discussing specifics of what he would apply when he returned to the Philippines. “We need to learn to try using non-kit-based experiments. We can be bold and make modifications for higher and better quality. For example, we will make sure to use modifications of protocols, such as incubation times, that are reproducible.” Getting very specific, Dr. King stated she will be using Luminex technology more when she returns home as well as Dr. Salim being more comfortable using mRNA as opposed to just DNA.

The trainee very specifically felt one of the very valuable aspects of their training was learning *R* (programming language) from Dr. Evan Johnson, and how to do data visualization. “I have read the biomarker protocol but got a whole new perspective on the data with the training using *R* for analysis and visualizations that are publication ready” Dr. Malabad shared.

But it wasn't all hard work and no play for these trainees! They complimented how hospitable their hosts were who also made sure they had fun. Highlights included visits to New York City, Table Mountain, and the beaches of Brazil. The trainees also mentioned that despite language barriers in some places, meeting local people in various settings was some of the most valuable time spent.

Junior investigators in RePORT are the future of the consortium. The trainees acknowledged that they will be looking for more ways to contribute including joining committees and working groups, as well as having the confidence to apply for cross-consortium funding opportunities. Dr. King felt, “This entire fellowship was a nice way to interact with different RePORT investigators...Since we are from diverse backgrounds, we worked together to understand different processes around the world...I feel like I can contact anyone from RePORT for assistance; they were so approachable.”

This first RICC lab training was new and bold for the type of rigorous schedule suggested. The RICC organizers constantly requested feedback from the trainees to make the experience rewarding as well as comfortable. Additionally, our conversation with them showed the importance of exposing young professionals to a variety of research types and techniques with inspiring, experienced professionals willing to guide and mold. Dr. Malabad summarized this sentiment well: “It was great connecting with experienced scientists and to see their passion - they pour love into their work. This training has been inspiring in many ways. When you are in your own country, you are closed to your own perspective. Being exposed to different practices, makes us realize we are capable of so much more.”

Dr. Babu remarked, "The training session conducted by RICC through the Junior Investigator program was an amazing experience. It covered both technical and theoretical aspects of advanced molecular techniques in biosciences." He added, "This training has equipped me with the knowledge and skills to attain new heights in my scientific career."


By Daphne Martin and Rajita Bhavaraju



With the team in Brazil



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Online Research in Progress

**Wednesday 28 August 9am-1pm BST
and Thursday 29 August 1pm-5pm BST**

[#RSTMH2024](#) | RSTMH.org/events

The **Online Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene Research in Progress** meeting is taking place virtually on 28 August 9am-1pm BST and 29 August 1pm-5pm BST.

The **RSTMH Research in Progress** events are designed specifically for early career investigators to present their unpublished research in progress to peers and senior experts in all fields of tropical medicine and global health. Certificates of attendance will be provided.

There will be guidance sessions during the event on how to: get funding, get published, and communicate your research.

The event is free to attend for members and fellows or £5 per person for non-members.

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RESOURCES



Overdue: Including Pregnant Participants in Tuberculosis Research

Join at 9:00 am ET on June 20 for a SMART4TB consortium-hosted webinar, **Overdue: Including Pregnant Participants in**

Tuberculosis Research In addition to hearing from community leaders who authored the Washington, D.C. community statement, the event will highlight SMART4TB studies that are planning to enroll pregnant and lactating participants and lead a dynamic discussion about how the field can move forward to address affected communities' needs urgently and safely.

[REGISTER](#)

Fourth WHO consultation on the translation of tuberculosis research into global policy guidelines

The Global Tuberculosis Programme of the World Health Organization organized a fourth consultation assembling scientists, public health experts, partners, civil society, and countries to exchange views on emerging areas of need for evidence and for global TB policy guidance to achieve the goals and targets of the WHO End TB Strategy. The **Fourth WHO consultation on the translation of tuberculosis research into global policy guidelines** summarizes the outcome of this meeting.



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