

## RePORT International Newsletter

July 2024

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### FEATURING RePORT PHILIPPINES



#### Message from Jerry Ellner

This month's newsletter highlights RePORT Philippines. Although relatively new and relatively small and despite funding gaps, the contributions of RePORT Philippines to RePORT International are disproportionate. RePORT Philippines hosted our Annual Meeting in 2019 in Manila, developed collaborations with RePORT Korea, Vanderbilt and Rutgers, is a major participant in the current clinical epi and biomarker protocols on treatment failure, sent two early-stage investigators to the RePORT Laboratory Training program and through Dr. Marissa Alejandria has a leadership role in the Executive Committee. Congratulations on your accomplishments and thank you for your contributions.

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**RePORT PHILIPPINES: APPLYING SCIENCE TO TB PREVENTION  
AND CARE**



### **Origin Story**

The Philippines remains to be among the top five high burden countries for TB with a continued increase in cases and deaths from 2015 to 2022. RePORT Philippines is a collaborative effort that was initiated by the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD) of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) in August 2017 through a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) of the US National Institutes of Health (NIH). The aim of establishing the consortium was to serve as foundation for national and international collaborations to facilitate communication in the collection, dissemination, and sharing of information and knowledge on TB. RePORT Philippines has two sites – the University of the Philippines Manila–National Institutes of Health (UPM-NIH) and the De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute (DLSMHSI).

### **Ongoing Priority Research**

The DOST PCHRD has always included TB in its priority areas for research. This includes basic science and clinical research on epidemiology, social determinants, diagnostics development, therapeutics and vaccine development, as well as host and pathogenomics studies.

The UPM-NIH site, launched in 2018, focuses on recruiting persons with drug-susceptible TB and their household contacts, while the DLSMHSI site, launched in 2019, focuses on recruiting persons with drug-resistant TB and their household contacts. These two sites complement each other in terms of research focus and relevance, since the Philippines has high burden for both TB and drug-resistant TB (WHO, 2022).

UPM-NIH started study enrollment in June 2018 for the community-based cohort project “Long-term outcomes of diagnosed TB patients in the Philippines” which aimed to follow up the outcomes of patients for 2 years post-treatment and



determine factors associated with unfavorable outcomes. UPM-NIH is also doing a sub-study within the RePORT cohort on “Dynamic detection of cytokines by liquid chip technology to evaluate the efficacy of anti-tuberculosis treatment” and RePORT Philippines and RePORT India collaborated on the proposal “Impact of latent TB infection and trained immunity on susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2 infection in India and the Philippines.”

The DLSMHSI COACH–DRTB Strategy, supports the RePORT International Consortium through a local groundbreaking project involving intensified case finding utilizing the Kagabay community workers to identify active DRTB cases and latent TB infection among DRTB contacts of bacteriologically confirmed cases with assessment factors for poor treatment outcome. The project also focused on the social value of the study with emphasis on the monitoring of adherence through community health workers using a patient-centered approach rather than traditional DOT.

### **Collaborations**

RePORT Philippines has grown and expanded because of our collaborations with our partners in the RePORT International consortium. We have ongoing research projects with Rutgers New Jersey Medical School and RePORT India (e.g., LTBI-COVID study), Vanderbilt University (e.g., TB pathogenomics study), and Korea NIH (e.g., TB biomarker study). In addition, two junior researchers from RePORT Philippines were trained in RePORT South Africa, RePORT Brazil and Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, as part of the TB RICC Junior Investigators Laboratory Training Program. This has significantly capacitated our consortium to do more advanced TB biomarker research and data analysis.

### **Challenges**

RePORT Philippines experienced several challenges in terms of research implementation and securing funding for the sustainability of the consortium. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, participant recruitment and follow up were very challenging because patients did not want to go to the rural health center to be tested for TB. Furthermore, many TB facilities were converted to COVID-19 testing facilities, thus scaling down the capacity for TB testing in the health centers. To address these challenges, the team implemented house-to-house visits to monitor and follow up our enrolled participants with the help of the community health workers.

Lack of funding for the continuation of RePORT Philippines is one of the most major challenges. Since the government funding for the RePORT Philippines sites ended in February 2023 and April 2024, respectively, patient recruitment could not continue to address new TB research gaps, such as subclinical TB. To address this, the research team crafted and submitted proposals for studies using the biobanked RePORT Philippines Phase I specimens. Thankfully, RePORT Philippines got several grants from DOST Philippines, Korea NIH and US-NIH which enabled it to maintain its biobanks and monitor enrolled participants.

### **Leadership**

The RePORT Philippines leadership group includes:

**Co-Principal Investigators:** Marissa M. Alejandria, MD, MSc and Esterlita V. Uy, MD, MPH

**Junior Investigators:** John Carlo Malabad, MD, PhD, Ruby Anne King, MD, PhD, Josephine Aldaba, MD, Carol Stephanie Tan-Lim, MD, MSc, and Jonnel Poblete, MD, PhD

**Laboratory Team:** Dana Kamyllie Santos RMT, Christine Mae dela Cruz RMT, Marck Anthony Sargento RMT, and Guia Jobelle Orduna RMT

**Data Management Team:** Kim Cochon, PhD, Noe Cenal, and Allen Jerard Lunaria

**Administrative Team:** Mina Capistrano, Rodel Morales, Brendalyn Red, and Marilyn Epe

RePORT Philippines welcomes researchers from other institutions to collaborate in its journey to discover and validate biomarkers, and better understand subclinical TB, host susceptibility, and genomic factors in the progression of TB.

Leadership can be reached through its investigators' email addresses:

*Dr. Marissa Alejandria – [mmalejandria@up.edu.ph](mailto:mmalejandria@up.edu.ph)*

*Dr. Charles Yu – [chrlyu@yahoo.com](mailto:chrlyu@yahoo.com)*

*Dr. John Carlo Malabad – [jmmalabad@up.edu.ph](mailto:jmmalabad@up.edu.ph)*



RePORT Philippines team 2024





## RICC POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWS

The RICC Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program provides each selected candidate with two years of training support and one-to-one mentorship from an experienced faculty member in the RePORT network. The primary objective of this program is for the RICC Fellows to become independent TB researchers, recognized leaders of the RePORT Consortium and mentors for the next generation of early-stage investigators. We welcome these promising, young scientists to the RePORT fold!

### **Mandar Paradkar (MBBS, DCH, MPH)**

Dr. Paradkar is Study Coordinator and an early-stage investigator for the Center for Infectious Diseases in India (CIDI), Johns Hopkins India, based at the BJ Government Medical College-Johns Hopkins University Clinical Research Site (BJGMC-JHU-CRS), Pune, India. He is the Operations Working Group Chair for the RePORT India Consortium and coordinates RePORT studies as well as several pediatric clinical trials at the BJGMC-JHU Clinical Research site. He is a trained Pediatrician (2007-09), IMPAACT Network's Young Investigator awardee (2011-12), Commonwealth Masters Public Health Scholar at Cardiff University (2014-15), and a RePORT International Postdoctoral Fellow (2024-26).



### **Sumedha Sharma, PhD**

Dr. Sharma started her research career with her dissertation in the Postgraduate degree. She qualified various national eligibility tests (Indian Council of Medical Research & Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, India) to pursue her goal in research and joined the Doctorate Program, with focus on tuberculosis (TB). During her Doctorate Degree, she was selected as a Training Participant in AIDS and TB international training and research program (AITRP) sponsored by Fogarty International Centre, NIH, USA. During her PhD and Postdoc, she worked in different capacities, and accumulated a diverse set of administrative, research and teaching skills. Her core area of research has been transcriptomics

for biomarker discovery and molecular diagnostics of *M. tuberculosis*. The work has been nationally and internationally recognized resulting in publications in various international journals of repute and awards at national level.



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**Felipe Ridolfi, MD, MSc, PhD**

Dr. Ridolfi is a medical doctor with specialized training in Infectious Diseases. He holds a Master's and a Doctoral degree in Clinical Research, specifically in Infectious Diseases. His research focuses on tuberculosis (TB) and its comorbidities, especially diabetes, as well as TB/HIV and HIV/AIDS patients. His work emphasizes treatment outcomes and adverse drug reactions. He is an early-stage researcher and clinician at the Clinical Research Laboratory on Mycobacteria (LAPCLIN-TB) at the National Institute of Infectious Diseases Evandro Chagas, Fiocruz, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. His mentors are Dr. Valeria Rolla and Dr. Timothy Sterling.



**Beatriz Duarte, MD, PhD**

Dr. Duarte is a physician-scientist from Brazil. Her research focuses on investigating tuberculosis and HIV among highly vulnerable populations with an emphasis on systems epidemiology. Her PhD research at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro utilized Brazil's national TB database to explore the link between social vulnerability and TB treatment outcomes, identifying key strategies and populations for improving treatment success. She is currently an assistant professor of Medicine at ZARNS School of Medicine. Dr. Duarte is currently developing research on the prevalence of subclinical TB and HIV in Brazil's Indigenous populations.



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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**





### **Research Course from The Union**

The Union is proud to announce it will be launching a brand-new course to empower researchers in low- or middle-income countries. The free course covers topics such as defining the research question, research methodology, data collection and analysis, ethics, study design and sampling, and project management and budgeting. This comprehensive coverage ensures that students gain a well-rounded understanding of the research process and its various components.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)

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### **NIH Entrepreneurship Boot Camp for pre-SBIR/STTR Innovators**

The NIH Entrepreneurship Boot Camp provides teams of academic and small business investigators with specialized innovation and entrepreneurship training. Instructors with decades of life-science innovation and entrepreneurial experience will teach participating teams to use a life science focused customer discovery process to assess customer and stakeholder needs, develop stronger business models and market strategies, and validate their commercialization plans in advance of their initial Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) or Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) application. The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp will accept submission requests for the Cycle 2 class from July 15th to August 16th 2024. Further information about the program and class schedule may be found on the NIH SEED website: [NIH Entrepreneurship Bootcamp](#).

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# Online Research in Progress

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

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

## Online Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene Research in Progress

The **Online Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene Research in Progress** meeting is taking place virtually on Wednesday 28 August 9am-1pm BST and Thursday 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
- How to get published
- How to communicate your research

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

[MORE INFORMATION](#)

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## Webinar: New Tools, Platforms and Resources for TB Data Capture, Visualization and Use

The ability to make good TB programming decisions depends on decision makers and implementers having access to timely, easy-to-understand data from multiple sources in one place. Join TB DIAH on 1 August from 8:00 am-9:30 am EST for a webinar introducing USAID Mission staff, National TB Program staff, and interested implementing partners to several new platforms developed by the TB DIAH project in partnership with the governments of Nigeria and Zambia to support access to high-quality TB data in those countries.

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[LINK TO REGISTER](#)

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