The Chagas Clinical Research Platform: an innovative and collaborative R&D network model for Chagas disease

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The Chagas Clinical Research Platform (CCRP) is a collaborative network that brings together researchers, patients, government representatives, international organizations and drug producers involved with Chagas Disease. It aims to support the development of new tools, promote capacity building and ensure access to diagnosis and treatment. As an open forum for debate and consensus building, CCRP is a patient-centered tool independent from public/private interests for identification of research priorities, standardization/optimization of interventions and collaborations. The model addresses the needs for open cooperation and data sharing, highlighting efficient use of resources, avoidance of duplication and expansion of existing knowledge and initiatives. This case study assesses the contributions and the initial impact of the CCRP as a collaborative model to strengthen neglected diseases’ innovation and access. Bibliographical and documental sources from its events, web-forum, interviews and surveys were reviewed. Quantitative/qualitative analyses indicate CCRP’s recent growth and consolidation. With a total of 324 members from >90 institutions and 23 countries, CCRP membership grew 26.4% from Q4-2014 to Q2-2016. 1038 web-forum contributions were made in 2015, mainly from Argentina, Brazil and Spain, increasing 45% from 2014. Six newsletters were issued and at least three highly cited articles published with guidelines for determination of activity of novel T. cruzi drugs, as several studies were implemented with the standardized methodology developed in CCRP discussions. The series of projects, capacity building initiative and networks in its broad scope demonstrate its initial effectiveness as an innovative model with potential application for other disease settings. Thus, the CCRP contributes in the optimization of R&D efforts beyond the biomedical approach in an inclusive model, strengthening capabilities of different actors including patient groups.

Key words: Chagas Disease, Innovation, Collaborative networks

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