New director appointed to lead TDR

TDR news item, 8 December 2011 - An international health researcher will assume the directorship of the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), based in Geneva, Switzerland at the World Health Organization. Professor John Reeder, currently co-Director of the Centre for Population Health at the Burnet Institute in Melbourne and head of its international health research group, will begin his new role at the end of February, 2012.

Professor Reeder has broad experience in infectious diseases research, running and expanding international research programmes and building research capacity in low income countries. He joined the Burnet Institute after spending 6 years living and working in Papua New Guinea as Director of the PNG Institute of Medical Research. There he worked on a variety of studies, including running the largest malaria research program in the Asia Pacific region, with the purpose of translating scientific findings into policy for improved health. He substantially increased funding for the six core areas: mosquito-borne diseases, respiratory disease, sexual health, disease surveillance, infectious diseases and therapies, and operational/implementation research and grew the programme to over 350 staff. When he left, he passed the leadership to a PNG national for the first time in its 35 year history.

"Professor Reeder’s proven track record of managing diverse and effective research will be a great asset to TDR,” said Dr Marie-Paule Kieny, who is the Special Coordinator of TDR.

Professor Reeder has provided advice to TDR on strengthening health research capacity in least developed countries, and has worked with the United States Fogarty Institute’s global infectious disease research training. He has provided support to the Multilateral Initiative on Malaria (MIM), the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, and provided grant guidance to the Wellcome Trust and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

A naturalised Australian, born and educated in England, he received his PhD in microbiology at the University of Manchester and has published over 115 scientific papers spanning basic laboratory research to large community-based field studies. He also holds a National Health and Medical Research Council (Australia) Principal Research Fellowship and a professorship at Monash University, Australia.

TDR’s Joint Coordinating Board Chair Sue Kinn says, “We are delighted that Professor Reeder will join TDR. He has a strong record of managing research groups that meet the needs of the poor, and ensuring the scientific evidence is used to change policies and improve care.”

Professor Reeder will be the sixth director in TDR’s 35 year history, and is looking forward to working with the many partners and stakeholders of the largest UN-based research group on infectious diseases of poverty. “TDR has a long and well-earned history of strong achievements,” he said. “I look forward to leading and strengthening the Special Programme, and meeting the many partners involved in this work.”

For more information on TDR visit: www.who.int/tdr