

World Health Organization Collaborating Centres (WHO CC)

Over 900 Institutions in 99 Countries supporting WHO Programmes.

The WHO collaborating centres are institutions such as research institutes, parts of universities or academies, which are designated by the Director-General to carry out activities in support of the Organization's programmes. Currently there are over 900 WHO collaborating centres in 99 Member States working with WHO on areas such as nursing, occupational health, communicable diseases, nutrition, mental health, chronic diseases and health technologies.

Historic background

The idea of using national institutions for international purposes dates back to the days of the League of Nations, when national laboratories were first designated as reference centres for the standardization of biological products. As soon as WHO was established, it appointed more reference centres, starting in 1947 with the World Influenza Centre in London for worldwide epidemiological surveillance.

As early as 1949, the Second World Health Assembly laid down the policy (which has been constantly followed since) that the Organization should not consider "the establishment, under its own auspices, of international research institutions" and the "research in the field of health is best advanced by assisting, coordinating and making use of the activities of existing institutions.

All WHO collaborating centres, whether they deal with research or not (most of them do), have been designated under that policy, which has undoubtedly enhanced national participation in the Organization's activities. There is, however, an exception to that policy, in the WHO Region of the Americas, where a number of "international health centres", some with regional (hemisphere-wide) functions, others with subregional functions, have been set up, and are financed and administered by the Pan American Health Organization, the regional organization of WHO for the Americas.

<http://www.who.int/collaboratingcentres/en/>

The NRL as a WHO CC

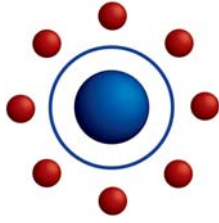
Title of the Centre: World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Diagnostics and Laboratory Support for HIV and AIDS and Other Blood-borne Infections.

The NRL has been a WHO Collaborating Centre since 1985 when it was designated a WHO CC on HIV. Early in its role as a CC the NRL offered training in HIV testing to numbers of laboratories and forums in the Region.

Presently the NRL serves most counties in the Southeast Asia and Western Pacific Regions offering quality assurance programmes to reference laboratories and blood-service laboratories.

The NRL's **plan of work** is to embellish international projects as a WHO Collaborating Centre. The individual projects together constitute an integrated quality development programme for laboratories conducting testing for HIV and other related infections. The integrated programme will support:-

- evaluations of test kits
- assembly of sample panels for assessment of kits – long term
- quality assurance programmes for high level laboratories in Southeast Asian countries and beyond
- training guided by the results of quality assurance programmes



- introduction, monitoring and quality maintenance of rapid testing programmes in the region
- the evaluation of low - cost test for therapeutic monitoring
- programme monitoring

Its terms of Reference are:

1. To provide advice, technical support and training in the area of organization and management of laboratory programmes for HIV and AIDS and other blood-borne infections.
2. To provide quality assurance programmes for serological and virological diagnostic technologies, for HIV and other blood-borne infectious diseases, in the Southeast Asian and Western Pacific (SEA/WP) regions.
3. To monitor the performances of participants in the quality assurance programmes on behalf of WHO and provide immediated remedial actions if required and identifying training opportunities aimed at improving laboratory performance.
4. To promote the implementation of quality management systems for national laboratory programmes and for the diagnostic and laboratory service levels.
5. To design and participate in WHO collaborative studies on diagnostics for HIV and AIDS and other infections.
6. To collect and hold a WHO repository of relevant specimens for the assessment of HIV virological tests.
7. To advise on and assist in assessing the validity of WHO HIV testing strategies in the SEA/WP regions.
8. To facilitate and provide training on behalf of WHO on HIV and AIDS and related diagnostics and laboratory programmes.
9. To act as a reference source of technical information on HIV and AIDS and other blood-borne infections.