Editorial

Combating Kinetoplastid diseases
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Ancient Plagues, Modern Epidemics
Today’s Kinetoplastida form a diverse order of flagellated protozoans that have evolved from an ancient lineage, rooted near the base of the eukaryotic tree. The disease caused by some species of the Order Kinetoplastida have always plagued mankind, and today most are at least as prevalent as they have ever been. Kinetoplastid parasites cause disease in humans, animals and plants, severely affecting human health and retarding agriculture development in less developed countries. Sleeping sickness (caused by pathogenic subspecies of Trypanosoma brucei), Chagas disease (caused by Trypanosoma cruzi) and the Leishmaniases (caused by Leishmania spp) are the major human diseases caused by kinetoplastids. According to the World Health Organization “sleeping sickness” affects more than 60 million men, women and children in 36 countries of sub-Saharan Africa, most of which are among the least developed countries in the world. In many of these countries sleeping sickness is currently epidemic, re-emerging in some as a greater cause of morbidity than even HIV/AIDS. T. cruzi currently infects 14 million people in Latin America. It is the agent of Chagas disease, the leading infectious cardiomyopathy in the world. The leishmaniases and the suffering they cause threaten 350 million women, men and children in 88 countries around the world, 72 of which are developing countries. In addition to their medical importance kinetoplastid parasites also cost developing nations millions of dollars in lost agricultural revenues, since other kinetoplastids are pestilences that strike agricultural produce from crops, to fish to cattle.

A Problem with Communication?
The study of kinetoplastid disease is now over a hundred years old and has always graced the forefront of medical research. A casual search of PubMed, which lists most articles published in major periodic journals over the past 35 years, shows over 25,000 articles published on kinetoplastids. This is a number comparable to important infectious diseases in the Western Hemisphere such as influenza, herpes or measles. Research has not, however, translated into therapeutics, prophylactics or even cheap effective diagnostics. It is widely accepted that the majority of research on these organisms has been driven by expertise that is out of step with field needs. Researchers on kinetoplastids have remained resilient to communication with health systems researchers who take a macroscale view of how disease control options might be integrated into declining and impoverished public health and animal health systems. Conversely, it has been easy for the therapeutic potential of advances made through research to fail to progress all the way to the field, since news carried in traditional, subscription based scientific journals is inaccessible to most workers in developing nations. Even amongst western researchers working on these diseases communication is poor. Those working on human disease publish in medical journals, whilst those working on the organisms themselves publish in basic science journals, those in veterinary disease publish in distinct
What are our objectives?

The advent of KBD enables the free dissemination of scientific information on diseases and control to anyone in the world with a networked computer. This is critical, since most scientific journals are not free and even the ones with cheaper subscription rates may not be accessible to researchers, clinicians, and field researchers in the poorest and affected developing countries. Moreover, the journal will serve as a focus in which the whole kinetoplastid community can participate: to educate, notify and debate about progress and direction. We hope our new journal will serve as a vehicle to promote pragmatic research and as a practical first step in tackling some of the communication difficulties that face those concerned with the eradication of these diseases.

Kinetoplastid Biology and Disease [http://kinetoplastids.com]

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