

MSF Scientific Days 2017: improving the effectiveness of humanitarian programmes through scientific research and innovation

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*MSF Scientific Days is a global network of events focused on how scientific research and innovation can improve the effectiveness of humanitarian medical programmes. **Sarah Venis** presents some of the highlights of this year's programme, including discussion of how to best gather evidence from emergency settings, and the challenges of community engagement; as well as an examination of different approaches to managing projects' processes and partnerships, and of innovations around mapping and surveillance data. You can contribute to discussions online using the hashtag #MSFsci.*



On Friday and Saturday of this week, the 14th MSF Scientific Days programme will kick off in [London](#) at the Royal Society of Medicine. These events are followed by [a day in New Delhi, India](#) on 27 May and another in [Blantyre, Malawi on 22 June](#). There are also screenings in MSF field projects, and linked events hosted by academic institutions in Australia and Argentina. The events are also broadcast online in English and French; with last year's programme having been watched by more than 11,000 people from 125 countries. We were particularly happy that viewers from many of the countries where MSF works were able to join us.

So, what are the MSF Scientific Days all about? The aim of these events is to share knowledge of what works in humanitarian medical programming with as wide and relevant an audience as possible. At the Scientific Days, we at MSF challenge ourselves and our partners to reflect on the evidence of the effectiveness of our activities in order to improve the care we deliver to our patients.

In London, we have one day dedicated to medical research, and one focusing on innovation. The variety of methods, topics, and settings represents the diversity of MSF's programmes. On day one, the research day includes presentations on MSF's response to major conflicts in countries such as [Yemen](#) and [Nigeria](#), and a round-table discussion on what we know about getting the best evidence from emergency settings. Our keynote speaker, Dr Jemilah Mahmood, will discuss the challenges involved in community engagement, to be followed by a session inviting participants to think about ways to improve the access to and quality of our medical programmes. A wide-ranging HIV and tuberculosis session covers new treatments, regimens, testing, and care. The day will close with a session on different approaches to disease prevention and elimination.



Clinical trial of a new vaccine against Rotavirus in Maradi/Niger. Copyright: MSF (published with permission).

Day two involves wider thinking around innovation, beginning by examining different approaches to managing our projects' processes and partnerships, from the large (a [multiplex fever diagnostic](#)) to the smaller scale (designing an [IV fluid bag holder](#)). The keynote speaker, Professor Peter Redfield, will be taking the long view on how MSF engages with innovation and how innovation intersects with humanitarian principles. Two topic-focused sessions will explore how we use mapping and surveillance data, and the experience of planning and deploying technological solutions to support clinical care in field projects. The innovation day became part of MSF Scientific Days three years ago, and the final session of the day includes a reflection on what we have learnt from these three years of presentations and discussions. The day will close with presentations on new approaches to tackling care delivery in complex settings or for neglected populations.

More than 30 posters have been submitted to the conference; these can be viewed on our [F1000 MSF Scientific Days pages](#), where slides and videos of the event will also be made available. We [invite you to vote](#) for the one you think is most interesting, insightful, relevant, and high-quality.

If you are not able to attend the events in person, we hope you can join our growing online audience, who are an integral part of the days. Please join us online – where you can ask our speakers questions in real time using the hashtag [#MSFsci](#) – and help us make this a true conference without borders.

Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the LSE Impact Blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our [comments policy](#) if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.

About the author

Sarah Venis is a research coordinator and medical editor at Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), based in London, UK. She is especially interested in how to ensure research has impact and is the content lead for the MSF Scientific

Days in London. Prior to MSF, she worked at The Lancet.

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