



EU tasks VERDI Consortium with investigating mpox and improving pandemic preparedness

The VERDI Consortium, coordinated by the University of Padua and Penta Foundation (Italy), has received an additional €5 million funding from the European Union (EU). Thanks to this contribution, VERDI will examine the impact of mpox on populations at higher risk of infection or severe disease, such as people with HIV, pregnant women and children.

Padova, Italy – 30 March 2023

Between the onset of the mpox outbreak in May 2022 and the end of the same year, more than 82,000 cases of mpox were reported across the globe. Of the 110 countries with confirmed mpox cases, 103 were relatively new to the spread of the virus, making the situation unprecedented. The monkeypox pandemic has put additional pressure on healthcare systems that were already strained by three years of COVID-19; it has also reinforced the need to be prepared for emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases.

With a view to better understanding and responding to the mpox outbreak, **the European Union has granted VERDI a top-up funding of €5 million to embed mpox-related research into the existing project.** Established in 2021, [VERDI](#) puts together researchers from around the world to collaboratively study the potential impact of new SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern in pregnant women and children.

As with SARS-CoV-2 and its variants, the future development of the mpox public health emergency is uncertain. Thus, vigilance is needed to monitor the epidemiology of mpox in populations at higher risk of infection, such as people living with HIV, as well as other groups who may be at higher risk of severe disease, such as pregnant women and children.

“We must be proactive in our approach to pandemics, especially considering the potential emergence of dangerous pathogens and viruses driven by climate change. VERDI's new focus on pandemic preparedness, including COVID-19 and mpox, will ensure that we are ready to address the challenges of future outbreaks”, said **Carlo Giaquinto**, President of Penta Foundation and VERDI Scientific Coordinator.

The EU contribution will support the **development of a research infrastructure for pandemic preparedness** across VERDI's three populations of interest, namely pregnant women, children, and adults with sexually transmitted infections. Thanks to the wealth of regional and international cohorts involved in VERDI and the diverse and complementary



expertise of its members, the VERDI network will be able to **rapidly pivot towards research on emerging infections**. Furthermore, it will provide recommendations for management of future emerging and re-emerging pathogens on a global scale.

“We are delighted to have this opportunity to broaden the focus of VERDI and include mpox and preparedness, and all partners in the Consortium are excited about strengthening our ability to respond to new public health threats in a timely way”, commented **Ali Judd**, Professor of Epidemiology at University College London, member of the Penta ID Network and VERDI Scientific Coordinator.

Additionally, the focus of the **Cohorts Coordination Board (CCB)**, which so far has been COVID-19, will be expanded to include existing networks and relevant patient groups on mpox and sexually transmitted infections. **Evelina Tacconelli**, Professor of Infectious Diseases at the University of Verona (Italy) and coordinator of the CCB, said: *“Strengthening synergies and information-sharing among countries is of utmost importance to prepare health systems to effectively respond to outbreaks of infectious diseases. By opening the CCB to mpox and sexually transmitted infections, we can ensure that these vulnerable populations are involved in research aimed at enhancing our society's preparedness to handle future pandemics.”*

The expertise and research tools for outbreak preparedness generated from the project will ensure that VERDI has a long-lasting impact on global pandemic preparedness, in order to make sure our societies are better equipped to handle future outbreaks.

###

Notes for Editors

For more information or to speak to the researchers involved, please contact Francesca Mazzetto, Penta Senior Communication Manager, francesca.mazzetto@pentafoundation.org.

About VERDI

The VERDI project (101045989) is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the VERDI Consortium only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Health and Digital Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Fondazione Penta ETS

Corso Stati Uniti 4, 35127 Padova, Italy

Iscrizione Registrato Prefettizio Padova n.30 ex D.P.R. 10.2.2000 n.361

C.F 92166930286 P.Iva 04150680280

www.penta-id.org



Penta
Child Health Research

The VERDI consortium consists of 28 centers of excellence in Europe, USA, Africa, the Caribbean, the Middle East and Asia, coordinated by the University of Padua and Penta Foundation (Italy), with scientific coordination shared between University of Padua and University College London.

For more information about the project, visit <https://verdiproject.org/>.

About Penta

Penta is an international independent scientific network dedicated to child health. Through our studies, training programmes and collaborations in the area of paediatric infectious disease, we want to improve the lives of women and children, wherever they live.

Penta was born in 1991 with the aim of undertaking independent clinical trials on antiretroviral therapies for children with HIV. To-date, the Penta portfolio of studies includes other paediatric infectious diseases, such as hepatitis, tuberculosis, fungal diseases, sepsis as well as infections in pregnancy and emerging or neglected childhood infections. Our work is the result of collaborations between medical professionals and researchers in more than 110 centres in 31 countries around the world.

<https://penta-id.org>

Fondazione Penta ETS

Corso Stati Uniti 4, 35127 Padova, Italy

Iscrizione Registrato Prefettizio Padova n.30 ex D.P.R. 10.2.2000 n.361

C.F 92166930286 P.Iva 04150680280

www.penta-id.org