



## Press Release

### University of Tübingen's first professorship in Africa

**German and Gabon governments back increased cooperation in infection research and immuno-epidemiology; medical faculty appoints Dr. Ayola Akim Adegnika**

**Dr. Karl Guido Rijkhoek**  
Director

**Janna Eberhardt**  
Research reporter

Phone +49 7071 29-76788  
+49 7071 29-77853

Fax +49 7071 29-5566  
karl.rijkhoeck[at]uni-tuebingen.de  
janna.eberhardt[at]uni-tuebingen.de

[www.uni-tuebingen.de/aktuell](http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/aktuell)

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Dr. Ayola Akim Adegnika.  
Photo: private

The University of Tübingen has set up its first professorship in an African country. The post is sponsored by the German government-financed German Center for Infection Research (DZIF) and backed by the government of Gabon. The new professor will be based at the Centre de Recherches Médicales de Lambaréné (CERMEL) in Gabon and focus on immuno-epidemiology and clinical infection research in the tropics. Dr. Ayola Akim Adegnika has been appointed to the post for an initial five year period. Dr. Adegnika is currently co-director at CERMEL

in the Gabonese town of Lambaréné, some 240km southeast of the capital Libreville.

“This new research professorship reinforces co-operation between the University of Tübingen and both the DZIF and our partners in Gabon,” says Professor Ingo Authenrieth, Dean of Medicine. “Via its director, Professor Peter Kremsner, Tübingen’s Institute of Tropical Medicine has had excellent contacts over many years with not only CERMEL but also with the Hospital founded by Albert Schweitzer in Lambaréné,” Authenrieth says. “Kremsner is at both institutions, as director and as research director,” he added. The new professorship provides an opportunity to step up collaboration in developing new vaccines and treatments. According to the latest estimates from the World Health Organisation, there were more than 200 million new cases of malaria worldwide in 2015. The same year, there were an estimated of almost 500,000 malaria deaths, 90 percent of them in Africa.

Professor Peter Kremsner says in Adegnika, the University has gained an outstanding expert on tropical diseases. 42 year old Adegnika will

conduct most of his research and teaching in Gabon. Malaria research will be an important focus. “Even though we have made great strides in combatting this infectious disease in recent years, malaria remains an enormous threat to the health and wellbeing of people in the tropics,” Kremsner says. “We aim to develop a vaccine which will provide complete protection against the disease.”

Dr. Adegnika has many years of clinical research experience. He specializes in the epidemiology of worm infections in connection with allergic conditions and malaria. He has also conducted research in the immunology and epidemiology of tuberculosis and influenza. He heads a number of clinical studies on new and existing vaccines and medications. He knows the University of Tübingen well. After completing his medical degree at the university in Libreville in 2002, Adegnika completed his doctorate in Tübingen in 2008.

Dr. Adegnika was a postdoctoral researcher in epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine from 2010 to 2012, obtaining a Master of Science degree. In 2012 Adegnika became an assistant professor of immunology of the Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES). He works as a lecturer and research unit leader at the Medical School of Libreville and the Ecole Doctorale Régionale de Franceville in Gabon, as well as at the University of Tübingen, and has a longstanding collaboration with the Leiden Medical University Center in the Netherlands.

The new professorship is an integral part of the planned expansion of the research center in Lambaréné. The move to develop it into a university hospital began in 2013 with the backing of Gabonese government.

**Contact:**

Professor Dr. Ingo B. Autenrieth  
University of Tübingen  
Dean of the Faculty of Medicine  
Phone +49 7071 29-82797  
dekanat[at]med.uni-tuebingen.de

Professor Dr. Peter Kremsner  
German Center for Infection Research (DZIF)  
University of Tübingen  
Institute of Tropical Medicine  
Phone +49 7071 29-87179  
peter.kremsner[at]uni-tuebingen.de