



Milken Institute School of Public Health

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

MEDIA ADVISORY

Pioneering Ebola Response

*Lessons and scientific breakthroughs from Jean-Jacques Muyembe Tamfum
Scientists and leaders from major health security centers discuss challenges and
opportunities for detecting the next pandemic threat*

May 24, 2022 – 10:00-11:30 am

The Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University

Live streaming on Zoom <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86534075689>

Washington, DC, May 16, 2022 - At a time when the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is experiencing its 14th Ebola outbreak since the discovery of the virus, the Milken Institute School of Public Health and the Mérieux Foundation USA are bringing together top experts in global health security, epidemiology, and international health to honor the groundbreaking work of Professor Jean-Jacques Muyembe Tamfum, the first scientist to investigate the first Ebola outbreak in 1976.

One of Time Magazine's most influential people of 2020 and Nature's ten people who mattered in science in 2019, Jean-Jacques Muyembe has also been recognized by numerous international awards, including the 2015 Christophe Mérieux Prize, the 2015 Royal Society Africa Prize and the government of Japan's Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize for 2019.

A professor of Microbiology at the University of Kinshasa Medical School, Director of the National Institute of Biomedical Research ([INRB](#)) and a scientific advisor to the WHO, Prof. Muyembe has devoted his career to transforming the management and treatment of Ebola virus disease. In the process, he has forged a successful model for local innovation and shown the world what investing in laboratory capacity and partnering with researchers in low- and middle-income countries can achieve.

Jean-Jacques Muyembe has advocated throughout his career for the place of scientists from the global South in international research, turning the tide on "scientific colonialism". He has worked to bring topflight laboratory infrastructure and develop local subject matter experts in the DRC so that future generations of Congolese are able to perform research in their own country.

In 1976, there was no place in the Democratic Republic of Congo where Prof. Muyembe could analyze the blood specimen he collected from that first deadly outbreak. For decades, the discovery of Ebola was only attributed to his colleagues in Belgium, England and the United States who had the laboratory capacity and resources to study the novel pathogen.

The symposium will highlight the strong international partnerships which have benefitted both public health and science in DRC and worldwide.

Professor Muyembe will share the story of an experiment which paved the way for the development of novel treatments for not only Ebola but also COVID-19. In 1995, during an Ebola outbreak in the southwestern Congolese city of Kikwit, he experimented with treating Ebola patients with a blood transfusion from a survivor. Out of eight treated, seven survived. A decade later, in 2006, he began partnering with a team of scientists from the NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Vaccine Research Center, led by symposium panelist, Dr. Nancy Sullivan, to develop and test a human monoclonal antibody (mAb114) derived from the blood of a survivor from that 1995 outbreak. The novel treatment, licensed under the name EBANGA, received approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in December of 2020.

Another important partnership is with USAID and the Mérieux Foundation, which joined forces to establish the Rodolphe Mérieux Laboratory at INRB Goma and address a critical lack of testing and surveillance capacity in eastern DRC in the midst of the Ebola outbreak of 2018-2020. The goal was to provide a permanent reference laboratory for Ebola and other viral hemorrhagic fevers, a secure biobank for samples collected during outbreaks, and an operations center for INRB outbreak response teams to enable rapid investigation of future outbreaks. With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, the laboratory became the main testing center for eastern DRC and the base for outbreak control in the region. Dr. Dorothy Peparah, Global Health Security Advisor at USAID, will discuss the agency's work to continue to strengthen global health security and the laboratory system in eastern DRC through the Infectious Disease Detection and Surveillance (IDDS) project.

Symposium Program

The symposium will cover Jean-Jacques Muyembe's legacy and unique contribution to science and medicine worldwide, as well as explore today's most pressing challenges for emerging infectious disease response and models for success:

- Opening and introduction by **Dr. Jon Andrus**, Adjunct Professor, Milken Institute School of Public Health
- Presentation by **Prof. Jean-Jacques Muyembe Tamfum** on 'Lessons from the discovery of Ebola and outbreak response in Democratic Republic of Congo'
- Panel discussion moderated by **Dr. David Heymann**, Chairman of the Mérieux Foundation USA and Chair of WHO's Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Infectious Hazards (STAG-IH). While at CDC in sub-Saharan Africa, Dr. Heymann investigated the first Ebola outbreak discovered by Prof. Muyembe. The panel discussion on 'Challenges and opportunities for future detection of pandemic threats' will feature:
 - **Dr. Tom Inglesby**, Director, Center for Health Security, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
 - **Dr. Rebecca Katz**, Director, Center for Global Health Science and Security, Georgetown
 - **Dr. Christopher N. Mores**, Professor, Department of Global Health, Director, BSL-3 Containment Facility, Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University
 - **Dr. Nancy Sullivan**, Senior Investigator, Acting Chief, Viral Pathogenesis Laboratory, Chief, Biodefense Research Section, NIAID

- **Dr. Daniel Mukadi**, Regional Director, National Institute of Biomedical Research (INRB), Director of the Rodolphe Mérieux Laboratory INRB Goma
- Q&A
- Closing remarks by **Dr. Dorothy Peprah**, Senior Global Health Security Agenda Advisor, USAID
- Additional half-hour session: presentation and discussion on the **current Monkeypox situation with Dr. David Heymann**

About Milken Institute School of Public Health at the George Washington University

Established in July 1997 as the School of Public Health and Health Services, [Milken Institute School of Public Health](#) is the only school of public health in the nation's capital. Today, students from all over the United States and the world pursue undergraduate, graduate and doctoral-level degrees in public health. The school also offers an online Master of Public Health, [MPH@GW](#), and an online Executive Master of Health Administration, [MHA@GW](#).

About the Mérieux Foundation

The Mérieux Foundation, an independent family foundation with public interest status created in France in 1967, is committed to fighting against infectious diseases affecting low- and middle-income countries by strengthening their clinical biology capacities. The foundation's action is focused on diagnostics, an essential aspect of patient care and an indispensable tool for disease surveillance and control. In the field, the foundation works to improve the living conditions of vulnerable populations, focusing on mothers and children. Founded in 2012 in Washington, DC, the Mérieux Foundation USA engages American partners in Mérieux Foundation initiatives and opens opportunities for new collaborations and technological innovation to foster sustainable health systems around the world.

Working in 25 countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East, the Mérieux Foundation focuses on 4 objectives:

- Increasing vulnerable populations' access to diagnostics by strengthening clinical laboratories in national healthcare systems
- Enhancing local applied research capabilities by creating Rodolphe Mérieux Laboratories, transferred to local partners, training researchers and developing collaborative programs
- Encouraging knowledge-sharing and public health initiatives leveraging Les Pensières Center for Global Health
- Improving conditions for mothers and children taking a global health approach.

Find out more: www.fondation-merieux.org/en/ @MerieuxFdn

About the National Institute of Biomedical Research (INRB)

The National Institute of Biomedical Research (INRB), founded in 1984, is a 70,000 m² facility. It has been a World Health Organization Collaborating Center since 2018, headed by Professor Muyembe Tamfum, MD, PhD, serving as the national biomedical research laboratory for the Ministry of Health of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It is a multidisciplinary institute that collectively has decades of experience in both the identification, treatment and prevention of diseases in the DRC. Its core competencies include medical and biological testing, applied and translational research, communicable disease surveillance, and promotion of professional growth and development. INRB has continuously developed and trained quality researchers and produced outstanding results, most recently in control, prevention, and research in the current Ebola epidemic.

Find out more: www.inrb.cd