

University plays leading role in trial to save lives in fight against killer TB

Innovative work at St Andrews University could revolutionise treatment for tuberculosis and save millions of lives.

A new trial, called MAMS-TB and undertaken by a Pan-African consortium, has just started and aims to halve treatment times for tuberculosis, one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases.

Each year, TB infects 8.7 million people and kills 1.4 million. While infection rates are still low in Scotland, TB is now a growing health risk in the UK.

A major part of the problem is that treatment takes six

months to complete, with patients required to take a combination of up to four different drugs every day.

Many of those who contract the disease do not complete the full treatment because of side effects, being unable to take time off work or afford travel to health care facilities. Partial treatment can result in longer, recurring infections.

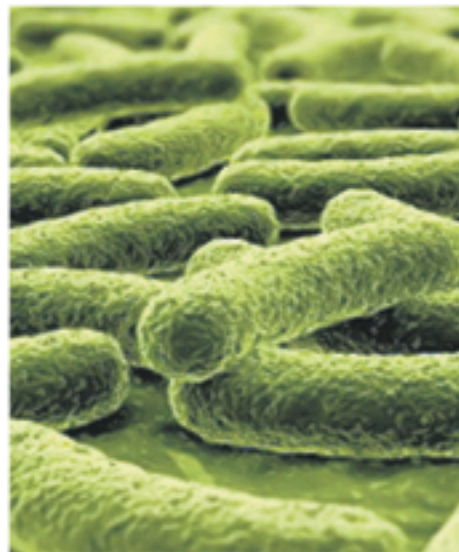
It is also leading to the emergence of dangerous new strains of TB resistant to the drugs used, the majority of which are more than 40 years old.

Stephen Gillespie, Profes-

sor of Medicine at St Andrews and a leading member of the consortium, said the MAMS trial was key to finding shorter treatment regimens to ensure as many people as possible completed their full course of treatment.

He added: "Tuberculosis is a disease of the poor and a disease that makes people poor; households can lose up to 30% of their household income when a family member contracts the disease."

MP Sir Menzies Campbell, who is chancellor of the university, hailed the work and said: "This trial could revolu-



Tuberculosis kills millions each year.

tionise the way in which we develop treatments for tuberculosis."