MSF Scientific Days 2024: research that changed the way we work

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Background

Médecins Sans Frontières' (MSF) Scientific Day is an annual conference that showcases research and innovation from across MSF and partner organisations. Emerging from MSF Scientific Days, the London Calling is an initiative that underscores the importance of translating research into real-world operational impact. Tracking the downstream impact of research is not only useful, but ethically essential. Here we assess how findings presented at last year's event have been disseminated and used. We explore whether they have shaped policy, influenced treatment protocols or MSF programmes, contributing to improved patient care.

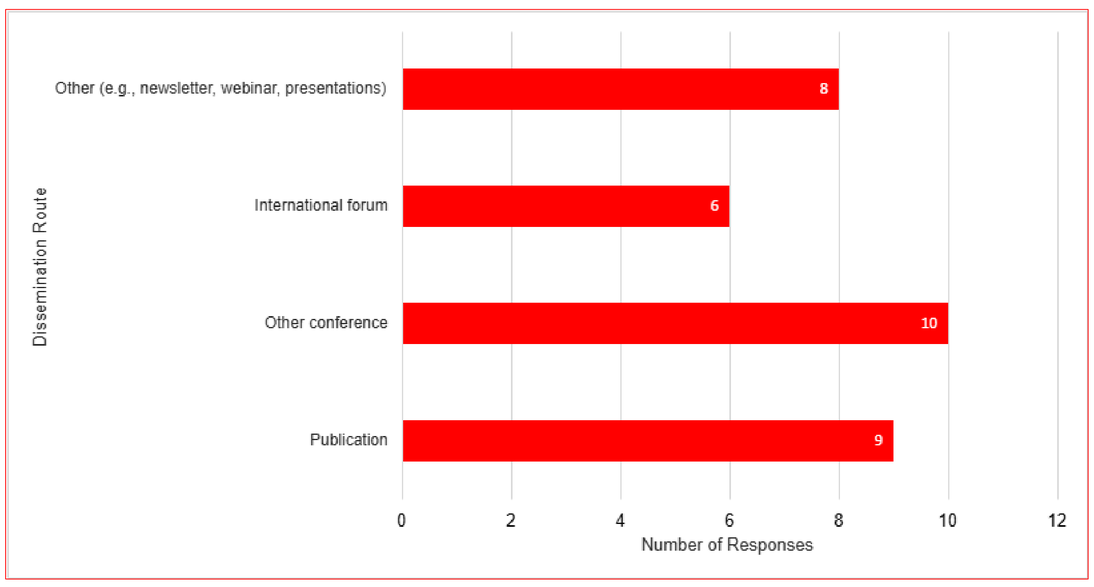
Results

Investigators from 12 (92%) of 13 studies responded to the questionnaire.

Dissemination

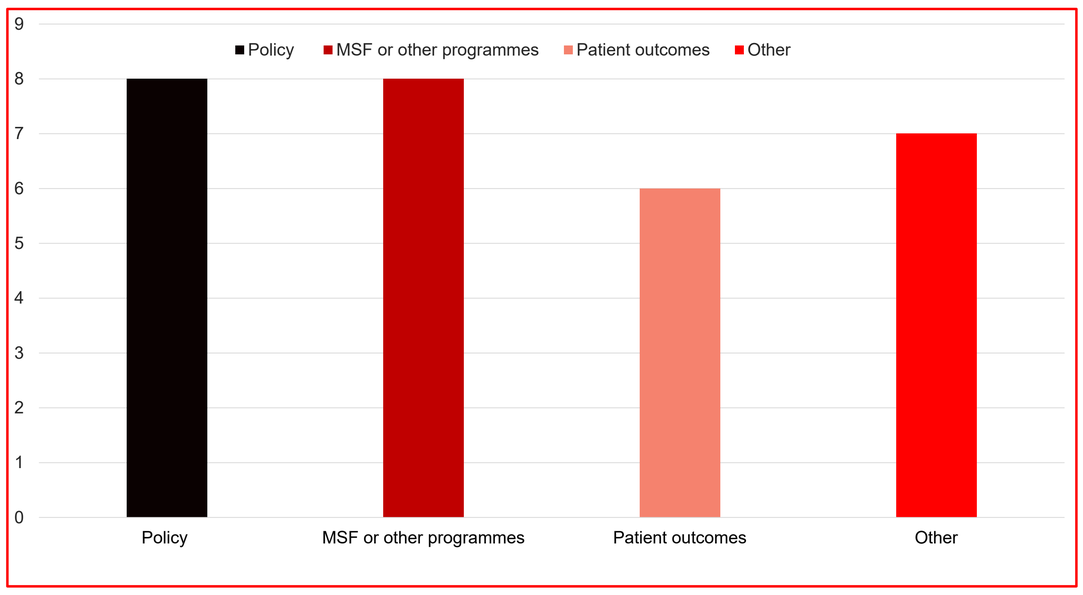
Findings from 11 (85%) of 13 studies had been further disseminated since MSF Scientific Days 2024.

The two studies that had not been disseminated further were ongoing. Most commonly, findings were shared at other conferences and through peer-reviewed publications.



Impact

Respondents identified several key areas where their research had influence following MSF Scientific Days 2024. Most studies informed MSF or other programmes and had impact on policy.



*Some investigators selected multiple options.

IMPACTED MSF PROGRAMMES

The Malaria Anticipation Project (MAP)
Showcased at today's conference, this early warning system, has already informed changes to malaria planning and response protocols in MSF projects in Lankien, South Sudan and Zamfara, Nigeria. Ongoing pilots aim to improve the timeliness and efficiency of interventions, with plans for broader rollout across other malaria-endemic regions.

IMPACTED POLICY

Safety of hepatitis E vaccine in pregnancy
Findings have been extensively discussed by WHO and SAGE, contributing to ongoing development of global HEV vaccine policy and the creation of a vaccine stockpile.

TB-PRACTECAL clinical trial cost transparency
This study, the first implementation of *MSF's clinical trial transparency policy*, has initiated international cost reporting guidelines and informed transparency advocacy at WHO and WHA. A toolkit from this research is already in use and influencing external actors.

Towards an arsenic-free oral treatment for human African trypanosomiasis
Final step in the development of fexinidazole, now adopted as first-line treatment for *T.b. rhodesiense* in the 2024 WHO HAT guidelines, replacing arsenic-based options

endTB trial: shorter MDR-TB regimens
Directly informed WHO's updated recommendations, supporting three new safe and effective 9-month regimens for fluoroquinolone-sensitive MDR-TB. Impacts global TB treatment strategy and MSF's clinical practice.

PATIENT OUTCOMES

Eumycetoma treatment trial in Sudan
Confirmed itraconazole (200mg BD for 12 months + surgery at 6 months) as an effective regimen (>75% cure with good adherence), supporting better treatment guidance for this neglected disease.

Conclusion

The analysis underscores the importance of ongoing scientific inquiry in driving improvements in operational efficiency with the potential for long-term benefits across multiple levels. From shaping WHO recommendations to directly enhancing the planning and preparedness of MSF programmes, these case studies demonstrate how research not only informs but actively drives improvements in the quality of care and the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions.

Methods

In March 2025, individuals involved in conducting the research studies or innovation projects presented at MSF Scientific Days 2024 were invited to complete a short online survey. Follow-up emails were sent to those who did not respond initially. Data from the research and innovation projects were analysed separately using Microsoft.

Limitations

- The research presented at MSF Scientific Days represents a selective sample, and as such, this analysis is not representative of MSF's overall research impact.
- Research impact often takes time to emerge, and this survey captures only outcomes from the past year - meaning longer-term effects may not yet be visible.
- Survey responses were provided by a range of team members involved in the studies, not exclusively lead authors or presenters, which may lead to variation in how impact was interpreted or reported.

Acknowledgements

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For questions or comments contact: scientificday@london.msf.org