



Electronic Infrastructure
For Thalassaemia Research Network



ITHANET project to enhance research in haemoglobinopathies

ITHANET is a new project within the 6th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development of the European Union. Its goal is to strengthen the Euromediterranean community of researchers in molecular and clinical research into thalassaemia and related haemoglobinopathies, and enhance its scientific potential using the existing and emerging eInfrastructure tools (GÉANT2, Grids).

Haemoglobinopathies, such as sickle-cell anaemia and the thalassaemias, are potentially life-threatening genetic disorders. Globally, 250 million people are carriers of a potentially pathogenic gene, and annually 300,000 infants are born with a major haemoglobinopathy. Concrete challenges lie in the prevention of the disease, in the symptomatic therapy of affected individuals, and in the development of a cure for haemoglobinopathies. To meet these challenges, 25 international patient organisations and Euromediterranean research centres conducting molecular and clinical research of thalassaemia and related haemoglobinopathies in 16 countries, united in April 2006 for a time frame of two years to form the ITHANET project.

ITHANET (the electronic infrastructure for thalassaemia research network) aims at harmonising and developing its resources, such as comprehensive databases, research experience and clinical expertise, and make them accessible for the coordination of existing activities and as a basis for collaborative projects. To this end ITHANET will set up a common information and communication environment, including teleconferences and webcasts on haemoglobinopathies, a common publication scheme for haemoglobinopathy case reports and implementation of an open European web portal as a repository of methods, protocols and data to exchange information on haemoglobinopathies, and to foster research coordination in the area.

At present the development of international databases and therapy approaches still has vast scope for improvement. It can be predicted that progress in these areas will greatly benefit from a coordination and integration of the international research effort by ITHANET.

The total grant for the project is approximately €1.2million, which is co-funded by the European Commission and the partners.

**Further information is available from the ITHANET website at
<http://www.ithanet.eu>**