Tulane University awarded $12 million to create Lassa vaccine and treatment

July 11, 2017 10:00 AM

Keith Brannon
kbrannon@tulane.edu
504-862-8789

Tulane University School of Medicine virologists Robert Garry (left) and Dr. James Robinson are part of a team of collaborators who've been researching Lassa fever in West Africa for more than 14 years. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The National Institutes of Health has awarded Tulane University more than $12 million to test a promising drug treatment against Lassa fever and develop a vaccine against the deadly disease endemic in parts of West Africa.

The NIH’s National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases awarded virologist Robert Garry two, five-year grants for the preclinical research — $5.72 million to evaluate a potent Lassa fever antibody drug cocktail and $6.32 million to design a vaccine based on a recently discovered key antibody target on the surface of the virus.

Lassa fever is a severe and often fatal hemorrhagic illness caused by Lassa virus. There is no
Tulane researchers have been studying Lassa in West Africa with a team of collaborators for more than 14 years. They have developed a rapid test to diagnose the disease in the field and spent years collecting blood samples from survivors to identify critical antibodies against the virus.