



## Global Campaign News – Issue #89 20 December 2007

Welcome to the *Global Campaign News*! The *Global Campaign News* is a forum for international exchange on microbicide activities and information with an aim to build a more informed and integrated movement for microbicide development and other prevention options against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. This and previous issues of *GC News* are available online at <http://www.global-campaign.org/gcarchives.htm>

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## Research update

### Nine-country survey finds misconceptions and stigma

#### Global

A new global study from the M·A·C AIDS Fund, the philanthropic arm of Estée Lauder-owned (NYSE: EL) M·A·C Cosmetics, shockingly reveals that after a quarter of a century of HIV and AIDS, nearly half of people still do not view the disease as a deadly affliction. Globally, more than 40 percent of respondents do not understand that AIDS always results in fatality.

The survey was conducted via phone or in person during a two-week period in September 2007. Approximately 500 interviews were conducted in each of nine countries – the United States, U.K., Russia, France, China, India, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa.

The M·A·C AIDS Fund gathered a group of policy experts, grassroots activists and fundraisers this morning in New York for a roundtable discussion. The six-member panel focused their discussion on three issue areas: access to treatment, stigma and shame and women.

“As we examine the findings of the M·A·C AIDS Fund survey, it is important to keep the broader context in mind – that only one in five people who needed treatment in 2006 received it; that countless people living with HIV have suffered violations of their basic human rights because of their status; and that today more women than ever before are living with HIV,” said Dr. Geeta Rao Gupta, a member of this expert panel and president of the International Center for Research on Women. “It is only within that context that we can truly understand the devastating impact of the misperceptions that still persist, as well as benefits that can be achieved through accurate information.”

Top findings of the survey are summarized below:

**Gender roles and corresponding discussions of safe sex with a partner are seen as contributors to the spread of HIV.**

- Seventy-three percent of people report that a problem contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS is that women find it too difficult to discuss safe sex with their partners, despite the fact that using a condom is proven to be highly effective in preventing HIV infection.
- In **Brazil** the difficulty women face in discussing safe sex with their partners ranks as the top problem contributing to the disease's spread, while the safe sex discussion for men ranks at the bottom of the list.
- In **South Africa** the difficulty women face in discussing safe sex ranks third, under only limited access to treatment and shame and stigma.
- In the **United States, U.K., France** and **Russia** the difficulty men face in discussing safe sex is seen as a bigger problem than for women in the spread of HIV.

**Many people mistakenly believe there is currently a cure for HIV.**

- While 79 percent of Indians surveyed understand that AIDS is always fatal, fully 59 percent wrongly believe that there is a cure for HIV available today.
- Older adults in France are twice as likely as young people to think there is a cure for HIV and nearly three in five do not understand that AIDS is fatal.
- In the United States, African-Americans are twice as likely as Whites to believe there is a cure for HIV

**People believe treatment is more widely available than it is.**

- Nearly half of all respondents believe that most people diagnosed with HIV are receiving treatment, when in fact only one in five people who needed treatment received it in 2006.
- Only people in China and South Africa believe by two-thirds or more that most people who are infected with HIV are not receiving the treatment they need.

**Prejudice, fear and stigma continue to exclude people living with AIDS from the mainstream.**

- Nearly half of people are uncomfortable working alongside those who have the disease; 52 percent do not want to live in the same house with someone who is HIV-positive; and 79 percent are not comfortable dating someone who has HIV or AIDS.
- More than 40 percent of people in India reported they would be uncomfortable to visit the same physician as someone with HIV/AIDS.
- More than 30 percent of people in the United States maintain they are uncomfortable with working with someone who has HIV or AIDS.

*Learn more about the MAC AIDS Fund and this study at: [http://www.macaidfund.org/news/pr\\_rl\\_global\\_study.html](http://www.macaidfund.org/news/pr_rl_global_study.html)*

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## **Advocacy in action**

### **EU Report calls for more investment in microbicide research**

#### **Europe**

A major new report has called for the establishment of a unified European HIV research programme adequate to the size of the problem, with a particular emphasis on microbicide and vaccine research. In particular it urges a doubling in funding for microbicide projects such as the European Microbicides Project (EMPRO). The conclusions are made by the European Action on Global Life Sciences Project (EAGLES) in its latest report "Health Report on HIV/AIDS".

EAGLES is a new EU funded project aimed at enhancing the collaboration between European researchers and researchers in the developing world to fight hunger and disease. Launched by the European Federation of Biotechnology (EFB), the project is supported by the European Commission and is a collaboration between EFB and scientific partners in Europe, China, Egypt, Ghana, South Africa and the Philippines.

The report points to the excessive fragmentation of European research responses to the pandemic so far. It also highlights a lack of awareness among European policymakers and other stakeholders about the time and money

involved in taking, for example, a new compound or molecule forward from the laboratory into clinical trials. Even large research councils and charities balk at the size of the awards necessary to cover these activities.

For some time now European microbicide scientists have been aware of the need for translational research to take forward the innovative compounds discovered by basic research programs and develop them into real products. Although in theory EDCTP is envisaged as being the vehicle to enable this, two issues stand in the way – a paucity of funding within EDCTP and the fact that it is focusing only on later stage trials. A number of administrative and management problems mean that, to date, only €40 million has been allocated from the EU budget, and just €37 million from the Member States. Furthermore, the critical early human studies seem to be the neglected “middle child”, perhaps because they do not offer donors the “wow factor” they are looking for.

The authors of the report emphasise the particular need to invest more in this area of vaccine and microbicide research. “If there were an effective vaccine delivered to those most at risk, or a simple effective preventative measure that a woman could use before sex, what a difference it would make!” they write. The challenge however requires an industrial-scale commitment by both the European Commission and Member States to turn ideas into working products. “In brief, it means thinking industrially - like a company eager to make a profit, but here eager to save lives.” The authors recommend that Europe create project funding of sufficient depth and duration to allow new prevention products to be completely developed and peer-reviewed.

Chairman of EAGLES, Dr Ismaili Seragladin, commented that “Europe with its unique history and global responsibilities, and its strong economy, has the duty to create such a comprehensive research programme and on a scale to match the scale of the challenge.

To access the full report, go to [www.efb-central.org/eagles](http://www.efb-central.org/eagles)

## Central American Conference on HIV/AIDS and STIs Latin America / Caribbean

Over two thousand delegates met on the shores of Lake Managua for the Fifth Central American Conference on HIV/AIDS and STIs (CONCASIDA). From 4 to 9 November, participants came from all over Central America, as well as South and North America and the Caribbean. A panel on *Technology in HIV Prevention* featured a Global Campaign presentation on microbicides, along with discussions of male circumcision and post-exposure prophylaxis. Attendees packed the hall, asking questions about microbicides testing and introduction. While Latin America does not host any microbicide trials, women’s health and rights networks and Global Campaign co-sponsors such as the *Red de Salud de Mujeres* and *Intercambios* have taken on microbicides advocacy as part of an integrated approach to meeting women’s HIV prevention needs. Learn more about CONCASIDA at <http://www.concasida2007.org>

## Rectal microbicides advocates meet the scientists at St. George’s Hospital Europe



On 7 November, the UK Campaign for Microbicides organised a visit to St George’s Hospital in London for microbicide advocates and health promotion specialists, eager to learn more about the specifics of rectal microbicide research. The researchers at St George’s are leaders in the field of tissue explant models for testing potential new microbicides, using vaginal, rectal and penile human tissue samples. According to Kim Mulji, one of the most active members of the working group, the highlight of the tour was the co-incident delivery of a new penile sample “which I am sure will stick in participants’ minds for a long time!”

The scientists are very keen to raise awareness about their research, and to dialogue with the community. Kim added: “From a community point of view, it was a great way to come up to speed on the science of rectal microbicide development, to engage with scientists, and to become more interested in rectal microbicide

development'. Stories about rectal microbicide development should be appearing for World AIDS Day on Gaydar radio (<http://gaydarradio.com>).

More photographs of the visit can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/13813795@N07/>.  
With thanks to Kim Mulji, member of the UK Campaign's rectal microbicides working group.

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## Highlighted Resources

### New report on funding for HIV vaccines, microbicides, and other options

The HIV Vaccines and Microbicides Resource Tracking Working Group issued its annual report on the state of funding for HIV vaccines, microbicides, and other new prevention options. The report is entitled *Building a Comprehensive Response: Funding for HIV Vaccines, Microbicides and Other New Prevention Options: 2000-2006*.

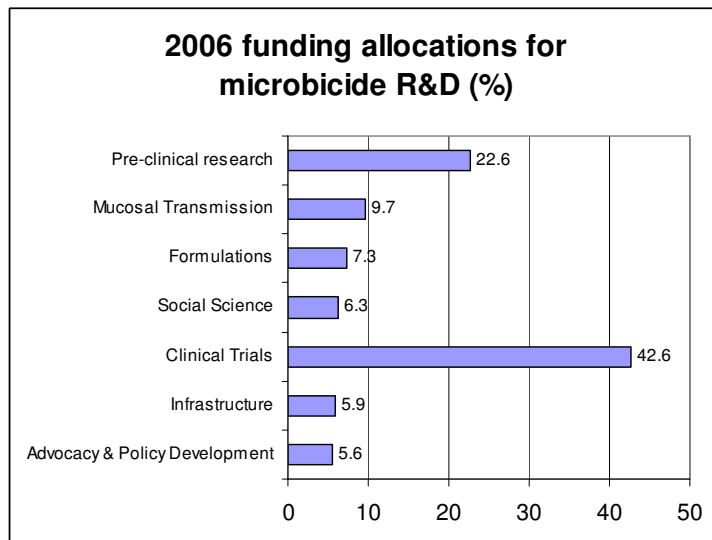
As its title indicates, in addition to tracking investments in HIV vaccines and microbicides, this year's report adds for the first time the tracking of spending on adult male circumcision, herpes simplex virus type 2 suppression, cervical barriers, and pre-exposure prophylaxis using antiretroviral drugs.

*Building a Comprehensive Response* details how resources are allocated among clinical trials, basic science, and preclinical work; it also analyzes the contributions from the public and private sectors and the proportional contributions of various governments.

According to the report, in 2006, total global investment in microbicide R&D was approximately US\$222 million, a 35% increase over 2005 funding levels. This growth was due to increased commitments from the NIH, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and European funders.

In 2006, the public-sector provided almost 86% (US\$191.2 million) of the funds allocated to microbicide R&D. The philanthropic sector provided 12% (US\$26.2 million) and the commercial sector accounted for 2% (US\$4.5 million).

A breakdown of global funding allocations by type of activity or stage of product development was estimated from a subset of investments in microbicide R&D totaling almost US\$183 million in 2006. In 2006, the Working Group began to calculate microbicide expenditures based primarily on categories developed by the NIH to describe microbicide-specific R&D – see table below.



AIDS prevention research advocates are well aware that 2007 has brought disappointing news from several prevention trials including, most recently, the STEP and Phambili trials of Merck's AIDS vaccine candidate, as well as the trials of the microbicide candidate cellulose sulfate and the MIRA diaphragm. Thus, the Resource Tracking report is an even more essential tool for all advocates seeking, despite disappointments, to make the case for not abandoning or constraining the research that is still urgently needed to identify new prevention strategies, even as we redouble efforts to provide access to proven prevention strategies.

The HIV Vaccines and Microbicides Resource Tracking Working Group is a joint venture established in 2004 by the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC), Alliance for Microbicide Development (AMD), International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), and The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). For additional information on the Working Group and to download this and older reports, visit [www.hivresourcetracking.org](http://www.hivresourcetracking.org).

## **CAPRISA Newsletter highlights key topics of interest**

The October issue of the *CAPRISA* newsletter contains several articles that will be of interest to GC News readers.

1. A Joint summary in which Salim Abdool Karim & Robin Shattock discuss tenofovir gel dosing"
2. An interview by Beth Robinson of FHI with Janet Frohlich on the involvement of the Vulindlela community in the CAPRISA 004 tenofovir gel trial.
3. An update on screening and enrollment for all current CAPRISA trials as of end September 2007.

You can read the full newsletter at: <http://www.caprisa.org/Newsletters/2007October.pdf>

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We welcome your input and contributions for future issues! Please send emails to: [info@global-campaign.org](mailto:info@global-campaign.org). If you would like to unsubscribe to the *Global Campaign News*, please reply to this e-mail with the subject line: UNSUBSCRIBE