



Global Campaign News – Issue #39 Aug 3, 2004

Welcome to the biweekly *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 STDs. This and previous issues of GC News are available online at <http://www.global-campaign.org/gcnews.htm>

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One of the Global Campaign's most important commitments--shared with our many partners in civil society, research, government and donor agencies--is to ensure that as the science proceeds, the public interest is protected, and the rights and interests of trial participants, users and communities are fully represented and respected. In 2002 we launched an initiative on Community Involvement in Clinical Trials, which seeks to support researchers and communities in building effective partnerships for microbicides research.

In July 2003, the Global Campaign and the South African Microbicide Research Initiative (SAMRI) co-convened a Dialogue on Community Involvement in Microbicides Clinical Trials, inviting representatives from eight different microbicides trial sites in four southern African countries to share their experiences, challenges, and insights.

Discussions at the Dialogue and analysis of history, theory, and current practice of community involvement in HIV-related research clearly indicate that the traditional mechanism of community involvement, with a singular focus on a community advisory board (CAB), cannot meet the complex and evolving needs of the microbicide field. We need to move towards a comprehensive process of community engagement, formalized in a "community involvement plan," that draws on multiple strategies for achieving the goals of community engagement. The Global Campaign proposes a framework for developing such a plan that is grounded in principles of partnership, mobilization and sustainability, to help communities and research institutions to work together to implement scientifically rigorous and ethically sound clinical trials.

The final report, "Mobilization for Community Involvement in Microbicides Trials: Report from a Dialogue in Southern Africa" describes this framework in the context of the daily and evolving challenges of microbicide trials. We hope it also contributes to the dynamic and broad-reaching efforts within the field of HIV prevention research to develop genuine partnerships between communities and researchers.

Access the meeting report on our website at <http://www.global-campaign.org/comm-activities.htm>

Microbicides at the Bangkok Conference Global

As many of you know (or saw first hand in Bangkok), microbicides made quite a buzz at the 15th International AIDS Conference in Bangkok last month. From the Opening Ceremony to the Closing Ceremony, microbicides received high profile endorsement and was effectively mainstreamed into key sessions on funding, leadership,

prevention and research. In his opening speech, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan demanded that the global community to work towards 'full access to microbicides.' The thread was taken up each day in presentations by Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA, Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM, Graca Machel, and Zackie Achmat, head of South Africa's Treatment Action Campaign. On Thursday, Zeda Rosenberg, Chief Executive Officer of the International Partnership on Microbicides provided a comprehensive update on the field during her morning plenary on microbicides.

Since the middle of July, hundreds of press articles around the world have featured both women and HIV as the new face of AIDS and microbicides as one part of the solution. This edition of GC News spotlights three microbicides related events at the conference.

Youth take lead on microbicides issues

Global

The Bangkok Youth Force, a network of leading organizations working on youth-related issues worldwide, organized an exciting and energetic two-day training for approximately 100 youth from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the US. The purpose of the pre-conference was to provide youth with information and skills to be able to effectively participate in the scientific, community, and leadership tracks of the AIDS conference. Demi Adebahun, intern at Family Health International, presented an introduction to microbicides that included clinical trial phases and how youth can be involved in community bodies that helped facilitate research. Yen Truong, former intern to a Global Campaign initiative in California provided a microbicides advocacy platform for youth urging them be involved in all fronts of microbicides development from mobilizing resources to making youth be part of microbicides debates. The participants were also provided with ways they could get involved at the conference and at home.



Samples of a placebo gel were distributed so participants were able to see and feel what a microbicide would be like. Some were concerned about efficacy and possible side effects while others asked how developers were making effective use of current resources to ensure the accelerated development of microbicides. Participants also wanted to start doing advocacy work in their colleges and making sure that microbicides were included in their curriculum.

Notable presence of microbicides at the Global Village

Global

Thanks to the Women's Health Advocacy Foundation of Thailand (WHAF) and PATH Thailand, community members at the International AIDS conference were able to find out more about the latest on microbicides and the female condom. The Global Village, an extension of the AIDS conference, was a space for various local and international community groups to display their own booths, have their own sessions and rallies and to network with other organizations.



At the Thai Women and Advocacy Task Force's booth, WHAF held one morning and one afternoon session on microbicides. WHAF director, Nattaya Boonpakdee, passed out female condoms and answered questions on some basic questions about microbicides. Participants also asked questions on the various microbicides safety trials that have been conducted in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Currently, another Phase I safety trial of the product, Carraguard, is being conducted among HIV-positive women.

In addition, the Global Village had its own media outlet that was all geared to capturing women's perspective on HIV/AIDS. Both radio and television conducted half hour slots for both English and Thai interviews on microbicides.

Joint Action on Microbicides, Treatment and Vaccines in Bangkok Global

Activists join together and demand "I want my M-T-V!"

Activists from three vibrant and diverse streams of HIV advocacy are recognizing the strength of numbers. (M)icrobicides, (T)reatment access and (V)accine advocates are exploring complementary strategies and collective action. The "M-T-V" trend got a big kick-off at the International AIDS Conference in Bangkok this month, with the launch of a Statement of Commitment and a jump-start on implementing a Plan of Action.

Framed as a moral imperative in achieving the human right to health, the Statement of Commitment and the 12-point Plan of Action can help governments, industry and civil society organizations work together to accelerate research, development and access in the areas of treatment, vaccines and microbicides. At a press conference in Bangkok, advocates gave several examples of how the comprehensive approach described in the Plan of Action can contribute concretely and immediately to improving health and well being for people and communities affected by HIV/AIDS. For example, treatment access improves prevention efforts, since people are more willing to seek counseling, testing and other services when they feel confident that this can improve their health outcome and quality of life. Widespread access to sustainable treatment improves equity in the context of prevention research as well, and will help move forward trials of essential preventive tools like microbicides and vaccines.

Turning this vision into joint action requires dialogue and cooperation among numerous groups. Our success in our own respective movements have brought about fundamental policy shifts, resource commitments and community mobilization-- but often we don't know any more than the basics about our colleagues' work! An "MTV Advocates Cross-training" workshop--organized by ICASO and the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network-- brought together veteran activists from all three fields to learn about each others' issues and to share ideas and opportunities (and even frustrations!) in working together on the 12-Point Plan of Action. Global Campaign partners IN-N (Indian Network of NGOs working on HIV/AIDS) and NHVMAG (Nigerian HIV Vaccine and Microbicides Advocacy Group) already have experience implementing collective agendas on the ground. IN-N, which has led microbicides advocacy in India since 2001, mobilized its networks to respond to the Government of India's treatment access plan. And NHVMAG is pushing the Nigerian government to develop a national microbicides plan similar to the national vaccine plan about to be released there.

Please have your organization consider endorsing the Statement of Commitment! To download the Statement of Commitment, visit our website. www.global-campaign.org. To endorse, contact Richard Elliott: relliot@aidslaw.ca

HIV 'Fastest Growing' Health Problem in England, Report Says Europe

This article was adapted from the Kaiser Network's daily reports:
http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=25035

HIV has become England's "fastest growing serious health condition," according to an announcement made on Wednesday by the country's chief medical officer (CMO), London's Guardian reports. The number of newly diagnosed HIV cases increased 55% between 2000 and 2002 from 3,629 to 5,615 new cases, CMO Sir Liam Donaldson said in his annual report. By the end of 2002, an estimated 43,500 HIV-positive people lived in England, but about one-third had not been diagnosed because of clinics' failure to test patients at high risk for the disease, according to the report.

Donaldson said, "More needs to be done to ensure that people who are infected with HIV are detected at an earlier stage so that they do not then infect other people, and so that their own health care treatment can commence earlier to reduce progression of the disease".

The country's Health Protection Agency on Tuesday reported that the total number of STD cases -- excluding HIV -- increased 4% between 2002 and 2003. The number of reported chlamydia infections increased 9% between 2002 and 2003, while the number of syphilis cases increased 28% over the same period, according to HPA, Reuters

reports. HPA said that the greatest increase occurred among individuals ages 16 to 24 and that the increases could be attributed to unprotected sex, according to London's Evening Standard. Some sexual health advocates said that the increases also could be attributed to delays in treatment, lack of sex education, long waiting lists at clinics and increases in the number of people volunteering to be tested. STDs such as syphilis or chlamydia can increase a person's likelihood of transmitting or acquiring HIV during sex.

We welcome your input and contributions for future issues!

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