



Global Campaign News – Issue #45 November 30, 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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49 screenings of Global Campaign's film on World AIDS Day Global

The Global Campaign for Microbicides and our partners are pleased to announce the World Premiere of our new film, *In Women's Hands*, with over 40 screenings all over the world! To learn more about our film, go to: www.global-campaign.org/film.htm

The World Health Organization declared the first World AIDS Day on December 1st 1988. Since then, health workers, advocates, and people living with AIDS have been using the day to focus the world's attention to the AIDS epidemic and the people it has affected. For 2004, UNAIDS has declared the theme of this World AIDS Day to be women, girls, HIV and AIDS.

Now is the time to tell the world how AIDS is affecting women and girls, and how microbicides could provide a new prevention option for millions of people.

49 film screenings are being held in twelve countries including: Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, 5 cities in Canada, Denmark, Ireland, 3 cities in Nigeria, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and 25 cities in the U.S. Below, you will find a quick summary of the screenings that are planned thus far. This list is being updated daily, so check www.global-campaign.org/worldaidsday.htm for the latest update and for the contact details of the organizers so you can get involved!

AFRICA

Botswana - Gaborone - BOTUSA Project
Nigeria - Warri - Care
Nigeria - Abuja - DFID Nigeria
Nigeria - Lagos - Nigeria HIV Vaccine and Microbicide Advocacy Group
South Africa - Durban - Gender AIDS Forum Durban

ASIA/PACIFIC

Australia - Fitzroy - Oxfam
Bangladesh - Dhaka - ICDDR: Centre for Health and Population Research; FHI/HASAB, and BCCP

CANADA

Hamilton, Ontario - McMaster University Medical School
Ottawa - CARE Canada
Toronto - University of Toronto

Vancouver, BC - Positive Women's Network
Winnipeg - Kali-Shiva AIDS Services

EUROPE

Belgium - Brussels - European Campaign for Microbicides
Denmark - Copenhagen - AIDS Fondet
Denmark - Copenhagen - HIV Denmark
Ireland - Dublin - Women's Health Action, CAIRDE
Norway - Oslo - Pluss - Norwegian Association Against AIDS
Switzerland - Geneva - 2004 World AIDS Campaign on 'Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS' UNAIDS Rm
United Kingdom - Brighton - International HIV/AIDS Alliance
United Kingdom - London - Positively Women (UK)
United Kingdom - London - International Community of Women with HIV/AIDS

UNITED STATES

Arizona - Tucson - University of Arizona Student Global AIDS Campaign
California - Palo Alto - Stanford University
California - Mar Monte - Planned Parenthood Mar Monte
California - Los Angeles - The California Family Health Council & California Microbicides Initiative (CaMI)
Connecticut - New Haven - Microbicides Now!
Connecticut - Planned Parenthood
Connecticut - Wesleyan University
Georgia - Atlanta - AIDS Treatment Initiative and the Georgia Campaign for Microbicides
Hawaii - Honolulu - African American Education Cultural Center Hawaii
Illinois - Chicago - American Medical Student Association at the University of Chicago
Iowa - Decorah - Luther University Student Global AIDS Campaign
Louisiana - New Orleans - Tulane University Medical School - AMSA/HPSAAN
Maryland - Baltimore - Maryland AIDS Administration
Massachusetts - Wellesley - Student Global AIDS Campaign, Wellesley Chapter
Massachusetts - Cambridge - American Medical Women's Association, Tufts University
Michigan - Lansing - Lansing Area AIDS network
Michigan - Ypsilanti - HIV/AIDS Resource Center
Michigan - Detroit - Michigan Dept. of Community Health, Division of HIV/AIDS
Minnesota - St. Olaf College - St. Olaf College Student Global AIDS Campaign
New York - Manhattan - Population Council
New York - Staten Island - Community Health Action of Staten Island
New York - Manhattan - Columbia Global Justice/Student Global AIDS Campaign
Ohio - Oberlin - Oberlin Student Global AIDS Campaign
Pennsylvania - Pittsburgh - University of Pittsburgh Medical School
Washington - Seattle - Breaking the Silence
Washington, DC - Global Campaign for Microbicides (RSVP to: rboehlke@path-dc.org)
Washington, DC - Chemonics
West Virginia - Shepherdstown - Shepherd University Student Global AIDS Campaign

Indian NGOs contribute to discussion on regulatory pathways in Asia

A delegation of civil society representatives from India participated in a meeting on regulatory issues in microbicides development, jointly sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), in New Delhi on November 8-9, 2004. The meeting brought together microbicides researchers, Indian policy makers, and representatives of the national drug regulatory authorities (NDAs) from several Asian countries. At the invitation of the organizers, the Global Campaign for Microbicides coordinated the participation of NGO delegates from India and helped organize a panel on Ethics and Community. The civil society participants emphasized the ways in which partnership with community contributes to the scientific and ethical rigor of microbicides trials, from building trust and communication, to ensuring a continuous process of informed

consent, to understanding social and behavioral dynamics that affect the interpretation of data, to building political commitment and preparing for access and use of microbicides.

Although specific regulatory pathways for microbicides are still evolving, there were several exciting outcomes from the meeting. The government of India and the research institutions working there expressed a clear commitment to pursuing prevention options for women, including microbicides. Dr. N.K. Ganguly, Director General of ICMR, called microbicides “the first layer of defense for women against HIV.” Dr. Ganguly also articulated the challenges beyond the development of safe and effective microbicides, saying that there must be parallel commitment to making them widely available, and preparing programs for access and support to users.

For many of the other Asian countries represented, microbicides were a relatively new idea, and much of the discussion focused on how microbicides would be evaluated according to the criteria of the various NDAs. One critical point was whether candidate products that come from outside the country (such as microbicides originally developed in the US or UK) would have to be licensed by regulatory authorities in that country before being tested in Asia. This may represent a barrier to progress in developing microbicides that are beneficial and acceptable in Asian countries, since the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and its European equivalent, the European Medical Agency (EMA), are tasked with evaluating products based on the needs of their own populations, and may not consider the different risks and benefits associated with microbicide introduction in other countries. There was support for building the capacity of Asian NDAs to evaluate existing data and make decisions on these products based on their own criteria, relevant to their own populations, while still ensuring the highest standards of safety for users.

Report on microbicide research in Russia

Europe/Asia

By Alan Stone (London, UK)

At the beginning of November, the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences convened a workshop in St Petersburg on “Microbicides for Human Health and Reproduction.” Several groups of researchers in Russia, in locations such as Moscow, St-Petersburg and Novosibirsk, are actively working on microbicide development - some of them inspired by their attendance at the Microbicides 2004 meeting held in London last March.

Alan Stone provided an overview of the current status of microbicide development with an indication of the health and economic benefits that would follow their introduction. The majority of the other presentations focused on isolating or synthesising novel microbicidal agents. The following are three examples of the research being undertaken currently:

Nataliya Perminova and Igor Timofeyev (State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology, Novosibirsk) presented their studies on a membrane-acting agent consisting of norbornene in a polycarboxy matrix. Out of several variants of this complex with different hydrophobicities, they have selected one with low cytotoxicity that still retains high anti-HIV potency. One principle behind this approach is that these complexes will only release the membrane-active agent at neutral or mildly alkaline pH (i.e. when they are in contact with semen).

Edward Karamov (Ivanovsky Institute of Virology, Moscow) spoke about his work on plant polyphenols and sulphated chitosans. The evaluation of anti-HIV potency and cytotoxicity *in vitro* allowed them to identify several substances with selectivity indices regarded as acceptable.

S Kuznetsova and colleagues (Institute of Chemistry and Chemical Technology, Krasnoyarsk) told us about their technology for isolating biologically active compounds from birch and larch. One of these, the triterpene betulin, is active against HIV and initial cytotoxicity data are considered promising.

It is hoped that the next Russian microbicide meeting in 2005 can also include presentations by local physicians, epidemiologists, social scientists, health policy officials, and representatives of at-risk and infected communities to broaden the discussion beyond just early laboratory science. Other important topics include: prevalence of HIV in various Russian regions and cities, evolving routes of transmission, features of sexual networks and how these relate to other STIs, and sociological and behavioural factors (such as attitudes toward condom promotion and condom use) that will impinge on the future role of microbicides in the Russian context.

NGO Briefing in Washington DC updates new and existing partners North America

On Tuesday November 9th, the Alliance for Microbicide Development, the Global Campaign for Microbicides, and the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM) hosted a lunch briefing entitled, Microbicides: Making AIDS History. More than 70 participants for numerous Washington, DC based organizations were in attendance.

Lori Heise (Director of the Global Campaign) opened the briefing with a short introduction to the three groups and the importance of advocacy for microbicides development. She emphasized the particularly important to articulate the need for microbicides on World AIDS Day 2004, whose theme is “Women, Girls and HIV.” Zeda Rosenberg (IPM’s Chief Executive Officer) provided an update on the state of microbicides research and development. Pamela Norick (Legislative and policy consultant to all three groups) spoke about legislative achievements in the U.S. and the strategy for 2005. All three speakers invited both new and existing partners to get involved with or continue their support of microbicide advocacy.

Finally, participants had the opportunity for a special preview of the Global Campaign’s new film, “In Women’s Hands”.

Participants provided very positive feedback about the event, “The talks were amazing. I really appreciate the clear discussion of both the science and legislative process.”

Microbicides Advocate talks at plenary session of U.S. Conference on AIDS North America

On October 21, long-time microbicides and HIV/AIDS activist Susan Rodriguez delivered a fiery plenary speech before the almost 4,000 HIV/AIDS service providers, advocates and educators at the US Conference on AIDS in Philadelphia.

As the Founder and President of SMART University (Sisterhood Mobilized for AIDS/HIV Research and Treatment) and as a woman of color living with HIV, Ms. Rodriguez felt compelled to address the issues raised a few weeks earlier during the US Vice Presidential debates. Neither candidate was able to respond knowledgeably when confronted with the fact that AIDS is the leading cause of death among young African-American women.

Ms. Rodriguez asked the assembled conference participants, “Do our leaders know that among Latina women, the rate of HIV infection is seven times higher than among white women? Is there any connection between their knowledge gap and the gap in funding for potential breakthroughs like microbicides, which promise a huge impact in safety and empowerment for women? The increasingly frequent answer government officials have for keeping women safe is to treat them like children and tell them to stick to the ABC’s – Abstinence, Be faithful or use a Condom. That’s fine except for one thing – what about men who won’t use a condom?”

Later in her speech, she noted that, “Women’s health care has always been parked somewhere on the back burner in this country. If health care for women is a low priority, how can effective HIV prevention, supportive services and research for women be on the national radar“?

For the complete text of Susan Rodriguez’ speech at USCA, please go to <http://www.global-campaign.org/GCNorthAmerica.htm> We are delighted to report that Ms. Rodriguez and other colleagues at SMART University are members of the New York Working Group on Microbicides, an advocacy coalition affiliated with the Global Campaign.

Global Campaign welcomes eight new steering committee members Global

Since its inception, the Global Campaign for Microbicides (GCM) has been guided by the insights and expertise of a global steering committee. The Global Campaign Steering Committee is designed to provide strategic guidance and

a thoughtful sounding board for members of the Global Campaign and the Global Campaign secretariat. The Committee is also a vital accountability mechanism that helps ensure that the Campaign remains true to its mission and responsive to the needs of its constituents, including women, end users, NGOs and GCM partner groups. The Committee also takes an active role in questions of Campaign leadership and long-term vision.

Each year the Steering Committee holds a one- to two-day, in person, meeting to review progress, address strategic questions, and plan for the coming year. The next steering committee meeting will take place in London on December 9-10.

Members of this committee serve in their individual capacity for a fixed term of three years, with the possibility of renewal for a second three-year term, if invited to do so by the executive committee. At any one time, the Campaign strives to have 12 to 15 active members on its global steering committee to represent key constituencies in the Campaign, selected to provide representation in the following key categories: geographic diversity; expertise in clinical trials, microbicide science, ethics, community, policy, advocacy, and organizing; PLWHAs; and GCM partner groups.

The Global Campaign is pleased to announce eight new steering committee members:

- Janneke van de Wijgert, Director Prevention Research at the International Antiviral Therapy Evaluation Centre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Joan Tallada, President of gTt, an NGO that produces printed and electronic information on treatments for Spanish speaking people living with HIV and their healthcare providers, Spain
- Manju Chatani, Coordinator, Africa Microbicide Advocacy Group (AMAG), Ghana
- Marc Andre Leblanc, Programs Consultant at the Canadian AIDS Society (CAS) and coordinator of the Microbicides Advocacy Group Network (MAG-Net), a coalition of over 30 Canadian NGOs, Canada
- Margaret Muganwa, Chairperson of the Society of Women and AIDS in Africa (SWAA), Uganda
- Promise Mthembu, Global Advocacy officer for Sexual and Reproductive Rights at the International Community of Women Living With HIV/AIDS, South Africa
- Sheena McCormack, Senior Clinical Epidemiologist at the UK Medical Research Council Clinical Trials Unit, UK
- Vimla Nadkarni, Professor, Tata Institute for Social Sciences, India

The Global Campaign wishes to thank our on-going steering committee members:

- Christopher Elias, Program for Appropriate Technology in Health, USA/global
- Cory Richards, The Alan Guttmacher Institute, USA
- Kim Eva Dickson, Reproductive Health Research Unit, South Africa
- Patrick Connelly, Cairde, Ireland
- Deborah Arrindell, American Social Health Association, USA
- Gaye Tharawan, women's health advocate, Thailand
- Shira Saperstein, Moriah Fund, USA
- Laurie Sylla, Greater Hartford HIV/AIDS Action Initiative, USA

Finally, we want to offer much thanks to our steering committee members who are rotating off the Global Campaign steering committee, though they will remain invaluable partners and friends:

- Dazon Dixon Diallo, Sisterlove, USA
- Zeda Rosenberg, International Partnership for Microbicides, USA/global
- Gita Ramjee, Medical Research Council, South Africa
- Geeta Gupta, International Center for Research on Women, USA

We welcome your input and contributions for future issues!
Correspondence can be addressed to info@global-campaign.org.

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