



Global Campaign News – Issue #55 June 24, 2005

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>

In this issue:

Tenofovir Stakeholders Meeting in Seattle
Microbicides featured prominently at the United Nations
Save the date – Microbicides 2006
EU approves action plan to improve efforts against HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB

Resource Announcements

AGI Article on Condoms, Contraceptives and Nonoxynol-9
Microbicides Advocacy in Europe – IPM and the GCM
A new article from MDP and PLoS provides a snapshot of the field in 4 pages
AVAC publishes new AIDS Vaccine Handbook
Canadian Microbicides Symposium Report Now Available On-line
HRC/Eldis HIV and AIDS resource guide on Microbicides
Speech on Women and HIV by Geeta Rao Gupta

Tenofovir Stakeholders Meeting in Seattle

Global

On 19-20 May, over 50 stakeholders met in Seattle to discuss issues that have arisen in the context of trials of oral tenofovir (TDF) as a potential HIV prevention tool. The meeting was convened by the International AIDS Society (IAS) on behalf of the trial sponsors, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institutes of Health. Participants included government officials from the countries hosting trials, leading advocacy groups, senior researchers, trial sponsors, a company official from Gilead, and representatives of the diverse communities participating in the TDF prophylactic trials. The fundamental goal of the meeting was to promote successful and ethical pre-exposure prophylaxis (PREP) research that is relevant, respectful and acceptable to the host communities within which these trials are taking place.

An official “rapid report” of the meeting was published by the IAS, and is available at the Global Campaign website at <http://www.global-campaign.org/researchethics.htm>. A full report is expected to be released later this month.

Gregg Gonzalves, director of treatment and prevention policy at New York based Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC), recorded his impressions of the meeting to share with others. The GC News editors included excerpts from these comments, as we believe they provide an excellent synopsis of the key issues and tone of the meeting.

Excerpt from Gregg Gonzalves:

“The meeting was put together to finally put all the different parties fighting over the tenofovir studies--the researchers, the activists, the sponsoring agencies, and ministries of health--into one room. For over a year now, a war of words has been fought out in the press, over email, through demonstrations, over these studies, yet no face-to-face dialogue has happened until now. It is a testament to our own collective sanctimoniousness that it has taken us so long to do this.

“Going into that room suspicions and emotions were high. As I mentioned in my talk at the meeting, I have heard people say horrible things about each other over these studies, activists talking trash about researchers, researchers talking trash about activists, government officials about activists, activists about government officials, activists

about other activists, researchers about other researchers, government officials about other government officials. It has not been pretty.

“Yet the stakes are incredibly high. If these studies show that tenofovir prevents HIV infection, and the animal data has been promising, it will represent a key new prevention intervention and one that will come probably decades before we see an effective vaccine or microbicide arrive on this planet. On the other hand, the promise of tenofovir doesn't negate the responsibility of researchers and sponsoring agencies to promote the health and well-being of communities in which these studies are being conducted or to condone anything less than a full partnership with communities in the design and conduct of these trials.

“The meeting in Seattle revolved around four key issues: access to care for trial participants that seroconvert during the studies; the standard of care for background prevention interventions offered to both control and experimental groups in the trials; community involvement in trial design and conduct, and; research literacy/community education. The meeting focused on the countries where the trials are still ongoing or have yet to be definitively cancelled: Botswana, Thailand, Cameroon, Malawi, and Ghana. Since the trials in Cambodia and Nigeria are effectively dead, they were not a central focus of the meeting, which was to see if some agreements could be reached to allow the remaining studies to move forward. The meeting participants were split between the stakeholder groups listed above, with about 30% of those in attendance drawn from community groups in Africa, Asia, the USA and Western Europe, those representing people living with HIV/AIDS, drug users, sex workers and other affected communities...

“The main achievement of the meeting in Seattle was the initiation of a dialogue. This may sound insubstantial, but this was the first time the critics of the tenofovir studies had sat down with researchers, ministries of health and sponsoring agencies in the same room. What is more, there were admissions on all sides that mistakes were made and that communication has to continue. In fact, Gates Foundation, NIH and CDC are willing to support a continuation of these discussions and the creation of a Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Stakeholders Group, to provide a vehicle for raising and addressing issues around the tenofovir studies on an ongoing basis. This is an important achievement for several reasons. First, it provides a channel of communication to address problems in the studies as they arise. Second, it provides a forum for accountability for all stakeholders. Some agreements and promises were made in Seattle and the fact that this group will likely see each other again once or twice a year offers a way to check-in to see if commitments are followed through upon. Third, it provides a forum to work through issues that only the sponsoring agencies or ministries of health can solve, such as figuring out how to link care to research.

“The big question for me is whether or not we'll now all proceed to work together in good faith. The Thais and the Cameroonians agreed to initiate discussions on how to resolve key issues about the trials between a broad range of stakeholders in Bangkok and Douala by the end of June. Will this happen or will everyone retreat to his or her pre-Seattle positions of accusation or intransigence and refuse to sit down together at home? Will all of us involved continue to work together to try to flesh out the millions of tiny steps and decisions that need to be made to figure out how to provide care to people who seroconvert in trials but who may not need antiretroviral therapy for 10 or more years in situations where current AIDS care programs are small and those who are not in clinical trials, but are sick unto death now and have a more compelling case for immediate care are receiving nothing? Will we work together to figure out how to navigate the extreme political challenges around needle exchange in settings where drug users are routinely the objects of state-sanctioned murder and where the sponsoring agency is under an archconservative government that hates harm reduction? What is clear to me is that the time for research or ethical absolutism is over.

“Solving these problems means hard work and working together, not screaming at each other saying that ‘you're anti-research’ or ‘you're unethical.’ I think these are slogans of the status quo, of those who don't want to do anymore than they are doing now on all sides. I have nothing but scorn for researchers, government officials, study sponsors or activists who after this meeting, go back and start saying: ‘we did nothing wrong,’ ‘we're doing all this already,’ ‘this is impossible,’ ‘they are just toying with us,’ ‘they are not serious about making changes,’ etc. We have a chance to work together now. We all share a responsibility for making this nascent partnership a success or a failure. It's time for the blame-game to end. Believe me, I will be the first person on line to say that we've reneged on our commitments from the Seattle meeting, but we've got to give this process a chance for a few months at least to see what everyone now does.

“I do think agreements were reached on some of the key issues, despite press reports to the contrary. As for treatment for seroconverters, this situation is less acute in countries like Thailand and Botswana with relatively stronger health infrastructures and more established ART programs than countries such as Malawi or Cameroon. I think the key agreement for Thailand and Botswana is that the linkages to care need to be strengthened. For Cameroon, I believe (and please wait for the full report from the meeting to come out to confirm this agreement), that the group decided that it was not too expensive to offer ART to trial participants for the first five years after it was clinically indicated, and that after that point, the national ART program should be able to take over this responsibility.

“I think all groups agreed to an enhancement of community involvement in the studies, and agreed to involve a broader range of stakeholders in each country, beyond the trial participants themselves, in discussions about the trials once they got home. I think everyone realized that research literacy was a bigger project than the current restricted notion of education needed to garner individual informed consent and that there has to be a commitment to find funding to enhance the research literacy of potential trial participants, their larger communities and other stakeholders. I am wary of even commenting on the agreements made, since any mistake I make here will likely be greeted with howls of ‘it isn’t true,’ ‘we didn’t say that.’ Well, these are my impressions and for the facts, you’ll have to wait for the full report in a month or so.”

Microbicides featured prominently at the United Nations North America

On 2 June, a high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS of the 59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly was held at the UN headquarters in New York. The day included an opening and closing plenary sessions and five round table discussions on the issues of human rights and gender, resources, prevention, treatment and care, and children. Discussion papers and webcasts for many of these sessions are available by clicking on “*UN General Assembly reviews goals*” at www.unaids.org.

At the end of the day, members of the Global Campaign for Microbicides (GCM) and PATH staff were joined by over 120 guests at the United Nations to mark the end of the meeting and to celebrate the opening of our traveling photo exhibit, *Giving Women Power Over AIDS*.



During the reception, GCM and PATH shared the stage with Mrs. Nane Annan and Paula Bock (*pictured here – photo credit: Amy Whitehouse*).

Paula Bock, author of the photo essay *In Her Mother’s Shoes*, which is highlighted throughout the exhibit, spoke of her time in Zimbabwe with Ruth and her family – a disease she contracted from her husband - reminds us of the real importance and urgency for more prevention options for women.

Mrs. Nane Annan, artist, lawyer, microbicides advocate, and wife to UN Secretary General Koffi Annan, spoke eloquently of her own experiences doing AIDS work while traveling in Kenya and the very real need for microbicides.

The exhibit will be on display in the United Nations Headquarters General Assembly Visitors’ Lobby through 28 June and can be viewed daily from 9am – 5pm.

In addition, the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) and International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM) hosted a luncheon discussion on new prevention technologies. Speakers at this event included: Kofi Annan, secretary general, United Nations; Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy to Africa for HIV/AIDS; Peter Piot, M.D., executive director, UNAIDS; Kapil Sibal, minister of Science and Technology, India; IAVI board member; and Humberto Costa, minister of Health of Brazil; and Innocent Nyaruhirira, minister of State for HIV/AIDS and other Infectious Diseases, Rwanda. A webcast and transcript of this luncheon can be viewed at the Kaiser Family Foundation’s website: http://www.kaisernetwork.org/health_cast/hcast_index.cfm?display=detail&hc=1443



Save the date – Microbicides 2006 Global

Following the successful Microbicides conferences in Washington in 2000, Antwerp in 2002 and London in 2004, the Microbicides 2006 conference will take place in Cape Town next year. The Conference will begin with a high profile opening ceremony on Sunday 23 April, and the scientific sessions running from 24-26 April.

The Microbicides 2006 Conference webpage has basic information about the Conference Committee, the Programme, and contact information. Visit the page and submit your contact information by clicking on “expression of interest” at <http://www.microbicides2006.org/home.html>

EU approves action plan to improve efforts against HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB Europe

The European Commission has adopted a renewed “Programme for Action” to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in its neighbourhood and in developing countries. Following Development & Humanitarian Aid Commissioner Louis Michel’s promise “to do better, do more and quicker”, this initiative of 27 April promotes “simple, concrete measures” such as the distribution of free contraceptives and access to HIV/AIDS testing, combined with support for further clinical research into microbicides and vaccines. It seeks to address the concerns of vulnerable groups, and proposes to launch political dialogue on issues of stigma, discrimination and human rights.

Commissioner Michel characterised the Programme for Action as “the basis for a continued, coherent and strong European response” to the global threat posed by these diseases. “It is part of the Union’s joint response to turn the tide of HIV/AIDS,” Michel said, “and yet another step to reach the Millennium Development Goals.” British International Development Secretary Hilary Benn urged approval of the Programme. “I don’t think people should die because they have sex,” Benn said. “You need to make sure that people have the means to protect themselves.”

The NGO community has welcomed the initiative, but remains cautious about its likely success: “The Programme for Action misses the opportunity to tackle the economic, social and cultural disparities which fuel the AIDS epidemic,” said Marielle Hart, head of EU policy at the Stop AIDS Alliance. “The political and institutional commitments required to address the factors that make people vulnerable to HIV/AIDS have not been acknowledged by the Commission.” However, like Benn, Hart found the support for comprehensive HIV prevention programmes “very encouraging.”

The Programme for Action comes as a response to a request by the European Council to translate Commission policy into action. At the General Affairs & External Relations Council (GAERC) meeting at the end of May, the Council recognised the importance of an intensified multisectoral response to HIV/AIDS and stated that it will work to ensure the Programme is properly addressed at the UN Summit scheduled for September.

Other notable European events in June/July:

- The European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad) and African Axis host a debate on the opportunities and obstacles for increasing aid for the African continent, 14 June in Brussels
 - The European Council discusses EU foreign aid, 16-17 June
 - International Planned Parenthood Federation – European Network host a conference on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, 17 June in Luxembourg
 - G8 Summit, 6-8 July at Gleneagles, Scotland
-

Resource Announcements

Global Campaign partner groups created an excellent set of resources on microbicides and related issues. Below, you will find several resources that can inform your own work and that you should consider sharing with your wider networks.

AGI Article on Condoms, Contraceptives and Nonoxynol-9

Global

The May 2005 edition of the Alan Guttmacher Institute's *Guttmacher Report on Public Policy* included an outstanding article by Heather Boonstra on the political debate surrounding Nonoxynol-9. In *Condoms, Contraceptives and Nonoxynol-9: Complex Issues Obscured by Ideology*, Boonstra provides the history of Nonoxynol 9 trials, the WHO and CDC recommendations about N-9, and how right-wing US politicians have distorted the findings to discredit condoms and contraceptives in general. Boonstra states: "Meanwhile, HIV and women's health advocates are concerned that the admittedly nuanced and complex messaging that should be taking place around N-9 may not be getting through."

The full article is available at: <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/tgr/08/2/gr080204.pdf>

Microbicides Advocacy in Europe – IPM and the GCM

Europe

The International Partnership for Microbicides and the Global Campaign for Microbicides are pleased to announce a new fact sheet that describes their goals, activities, and collaborators in Europe. While this fact sheet is written about the groups' activities in Europe, it contains a useful table that articulates the differences and similarities between the GCM and IPM agendas. This new resource is available for download at the GC Europe website: www.global-campaign.org/GCEurope.htm

A new article from MDP and PLoS provides a snapshot of the field in 4 pages

Global

The current edition of the Public Library of Science (PLoS)'s *Medicine* features a four page summary of the microbicides field. Written by Jonathan Weber, Kamal Desai, Janet Darbyshire, on behalf of the Microbicides Development Programme, *The Development of Vaginal Microbicides for the Prevention of HIV Transmission*, provides an up-to-date snapshot of the field including reasons for developing chemical barriers against HIV, mechanisms of action, the status of clinical trials, and issues of advocacy and funding. This article would be appropriate for readers who have some familiarity with microbicides but want a better grounding in the science or current status of trials.

The full text of the article at the PLoS website by searching under "microbicide" at www.plosmedicine.org. PLoS is a non-profit organization of scientists and physicians committed to making the world's scientific and medical literature a freely available public resource.

AVAC publishes new AIDS Vaccine Handbook

North America

The AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC) has recently published a collection of easy-to-read, lively essays written by people involved in research and advocacy from around the globe--*the AIDS Vaccine Handbook: Global Perspectives*. Edited by Patricia Kahn, the *Handbook* provides an overview of the key scientific, policy, social, ethical and economic challenges, and of the diverse experience gained around the world over the past two decades. The *Handbook* aims to address questions including:

- How can I understand the science behind experimental AIDS vaccines?
- Is it safe to volunteer for an AIDS vaccine clinical trial?
- Are clinical trials that take place in developing countries ethical?
- What can communities do to help foster and encourage AIDS vaccine development?
- Where can I go for information, and what can I do to help?

The *Handbook* is available electronically www.avac.org/handbook. Individual copies are available free of charge to community organizations by sending an email request to handbook@avac.org. For bulk copies, please contact avac@avac.org.

Canadian Microbicides Symposium Report Now Available On-line North America

As reported in GC News #51, in March 2005, eight partners hosted the "2nd Canadian Microbicides Symposium: Advancing HIV Prevention" in Ottawa, Canada. A concise 8-page report of the Symposium can be found at the following link. <http://www.cdnaids.ca/web/mailouts.nsf/pages/cas-mailout-0345=20>

HRC/Eldis HIV and AIDS resource guide on Microbicides Global

Produced in collaboration with subject experts, this guide provides an in-depth introduction to microbicides including how microbicides are likely to work, their potential benefits and the important issues in their development, distribution and promotion. The guide highlights important research and links to summaries of documents, websites and other key resources. Access the guide at: <http://www.eldis.org/hiv aids/microbicides.htm>

Speech on women and AIDS by Geeta Rao Gupta North America

Geeta Rao Gupta, president of the International Center for Research on Women, gave a rousing speech on women and HIV at the InterAction Forum held in Washington, DC on 2 June. As she notes: "The time to act is now – and our actions must be bold and informed by evidence, not by ideology – because the women who are infected, the children who are orphaned are not just statistics, they are real people who have a right to live decent, healthy, and productive lives."

The full text of Dr. Gupta's remarks is available at http://www.icrw.org/docs/2005_speech_grg_interaction.pdf

We welcome your input and contributions for future issues! Please send emails to: 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