



## Global Campaign News – Issue #75 22 January 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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## Funding news

### New European funding for microbicides Europe

The European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) has made its first awards for microbicide trial site capacity building in Africa. Two of the funded projects are sponsored by UK institutions, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the Medical Research Council respectively. The third is based in the Netherlands, with collaboration from Belgian partners. Together these projects, with funding just over 7 million euros, will build the capacity of sites in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Rwanda, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and South Africa to participate in planned Phase 3 trials of microbicides.

Meanwhile the European Commission has awarded 15.5 million euros to the EUROPRISE consortium focusing on microbicide and vaccine research under the Sixth Research Framework (FP6). Founded on the premise that microbicides and vaccines that target multiple stages of mucosal immunity will have the best chances of success, the network will bring together 32 institutions across 10 countries, coordinated by Professor Robin Shattock at the University of London. About a third of the funding will be directed towards microbicidal agents.

On 1 January 2007, the EU launched the eagerly awaited Seventh Research Framework (FP7). The bad news is that funding for AIDS, TB and malaria will be frozen at 2006 levels until 2010 and will have to be stretched to include research into avian flu, SARS and neglected diseases. European microbicide scientists will have to wait until 2008 for the first specific calls for proposals.

The good news is that the EU will for the first time fund public-private partnerships that are based outside of the EU. The Campaign is advocating for an increase in funding for AIDS research so that progress on microbicides can continue. For more information on EU funded microbicides research activities, contact Rebekah Webb, Global Campaign Europe coordinator, at [rwebb@path.org](mailto:rwebb@path.org)

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## Research updates

## More information on the Brazilian algae candidate

### Global

On January 16, BBC News Online reported that Brazilian researchers had found a candidate microbicide that was 95% effective in laboratory tests. The report then noted that, "First-generation microbicides now being tested are expected... to be 50-60% effective. However, preliminary tests of the Brazil gel suggest it could be substantially more effective."

While news of any new microbicide lead is exciting, this report may have implied a bigger break-through than actually occurred. Pre-clinical (laboratory) testing is a first step in product development and candidates are not advanced to the next steps unless they show strong indications of potential effectiveness. There are, however, many more tests that a compound must clear before it even enters human trials as a candidate microbicide

Dr Luiz Castello Branco, an immunologist at the well-regarded Oswaldo Cruz Institute in Rio de Janeiro and Principal Investigator of this compound, shared the following information with our good colleagues at the Alliance for Microbicide Development. The compound is dolabellane diterpene isolated from the marine algae *Dictyota pfaflii*. In the test tube, it appears to inhibit HIV-1 reverse transcriptase and HIV-1 replication at a post-transcriptional step.

One journal article on their findings has been published and a second one is in press. Dr. Branco's team believes that the potentially inflated news of their results was generated by the media and may have arisen from a misunderstanding of the original news coverage in Portuguese.

## Royalty free licenses of Tenofovir to IPM and CONRAD

### Global

In December, Gilead Sciences, the pharmaceutical company that produces the antiretroviral drug tenofovir, granted royalty free licenses for tenofovir to both the International Partnership for Microbicides and CONRAD. Under the terms of the agreement, both IPM and CONRAD will have royalty-free licenses to develop, manufacture and (if proven efficacious) arrange for distribution of tenofovir as a microbicide in approximately 100 resource-limited countries hardest hit by the HIV epidemic. Gilead will also facilitate the manufacturing of tenofovir by third-party contract manufacturers to supply ongoing clinical studies for two years, after which time other suppliers, including generic manufacturers, may be utilised. Tenofovir is currently being tested for safety as a vaginal microbicide in a Phase IIB study.

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## Advocacy in action

### Stepping out in Kenya: World AIDS Day and Human Rights Day

The Global Campaign staff in Kenya commemorated both World AIDS Day and Human Rights Day in December with local partners.



Teaming up with the Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO), the Global Campaign for Microbicides participated in the World AIDS Day activities in Kenya on 1 December 2006 by setting up an exhibition stand during the national celebrations held at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (pictured here).

The exhibition stimulated discussion between members of the public who visited the stand and the microbicide advocates. There was a lot of interest in microbicides, and it was evident from questions asked that few people had heard about microbicides. The questions spanned a broad range of topics including what microbicides research activities are being conducted in Kenya; how would research establish the effectiveness of microbicides;

GCM's Pauline Irungu getting the word out

and whether or not the participants would be intentionally exposed to HIV to establish microbicide effectiveness. Several people had concerns about the role of men in microbicides research, including the acceptability of microbicide use by men.

Human Rights Day is commemorated around the world every year on 10 December to mark the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was officially adopted in Paris on 10 December 1948. The theme for Human Rights Day 2006 was poverty, as both a consequence and cause of human rights violations. In Kenya, activities were spearheaded by a committee and convened by the Kenya Human Rights Commission and Physicians for Human Rights. The committee prioritized two themes: HIV/AIDS and women's rights, and health financing in Kenya as the key areas to be addressed through an expert panel session that spoke to civil society and government agencies.

The Global Campaign presented on *Women, HIV/AIDS and Human rights: a focus on microbicides*, with an emphasis on the potential impact of microbicides on women's rights, especially those women living in poverty. Participants expressed concern about the rising gap in HIV infections between girls and boys in the country, had questions about the focus on rectal microbicides, and expressed fears about condom migration. Through the plenary sessions, the participants were able to discuss these concerns and receive updates from the panelists. In the new year, the Global Campaign will build on this momentum and seek further engagement in microbicides activities.

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## **New Resources**

### **Feature article and report on male circumcision**

As *GC News* readers have already heard, the favorable results that were released in December 2006 about male circumcision could have a huge impact on the field of HIV prevention. In the 14 January 2007 *New York Times Magazine*, Tina Rosenberg talks about the need to view male circumcision as a part of a comprehensive response and the importance of safe male circumcision practices. Read the full article at:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/14/magazine/14wwln\\_lede.t.html?adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1168963285-4inuoTxR0ByzLyF117mQuA](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/14/magazine/14wwln_lede.t.html?adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1168963285-4inuoTxR0ByzLyF117mQuA)

In addition, the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Network updated their report on male circumcision – *A New Way to Protect Against HIV? Understanding the Results of Male Circumcision Studies for AIDS Prevention*. View this revised report under “What’s New” at: <http://www.aidsvaccineclearinghouse.org/MC/index.html>.

### **Cervical Barrier Advancement Society Newsletter features new research**

Several times a year, the Cervical Barrier Advancement Society (CBAS) distributes an electronic newsletter that keeps subscribers abreast of new research, activities in the field, and relevant events. The January 2007 issue features research on sex preparation and diaphragm acceptability in sex work in Nairobi, administering vaginal microbicides in Brazil, and an infant HIV vaccine trial. Read the latest issue and sign up for future mailings at:

<http://www.cervicalbarriers.org/newsletter/>

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