



Global Campaign News November 22, 2002

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.

We welcome your input and contributions. Correspondence can be addressed 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.

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Legislative Update: Death Knell of Global AIDS Bill

On November 22, the week before World AIDS Day, Congress adjourned and allowed the "Global AIDS" bill to die. This landmark piece of legislation, known formally as the "U.S. Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, TB, and Malaria Act of 2002" (HR 2069), had passed both the House and the Senate. It was awaiting a final step in which the two versions of the bill are reconciled by a Conference Committee and then presented to the two chambers for final passage. HR 2069 was the first real effort by *any* U.S. Congress to create a livable, long term strategy to "fight infectious diseases globally and intensify treatment efforts" against HIV/AIDS.

When the 107th Congress adjourned today, all the bills still pending before it died. The legislative slate is now wiped clean for the seating in January of the 108th Congress, which will include members elected on November 5.

Another November 22 casualty was the Microbicide Development Act of 2001 (HR 2405 and S. 1752). Microbicide advocates in the US worked hard for two years to generate support for these bills and had persuaded 66 Senators and Representatives to co-sponsor them -- more than double the number of co-sponsors signed onto the previous version of the Act introduced in the 106th Congress. On the basis of that support, we got critical provisions from the Microbicide Development Act folded into the Leadership Act (HR 2069) -- thus winning recognition for microbicides as a key element in the global fight against AIDS.

For the last month, we've kept the Leadership Act on life support as we worked to persuade Congress to act on this historic bill. We sent e-mails and made phone calls,

wrote newspaper columns, and visited our legislators in Washington, DC and in their district offices. Still, our bills died.

Here's what we lost:

HR2069 would have:

- doubled the U.S. government's current commitment to fighting AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria from the \$952 million we spend now to \$2.2 billion in 2003 and \$2.6 billion in 2004.
- funded the procurement of HIV/AIDS drugs, prevention programs, and support for AIDS-orphaned children, as well as vaccine and microbicide research
- more than tripled the U.S. contribution to the Global Fund Against HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB from its current \$300 million to \$1 billion for 2003 and \$1.2 billion in 2004 (still not enough, but progress).

Microbicide Development Act of 2001 would have:

- mandated substantial increases in the US government's investment in microbicide research and development and
- required the expansion and coordination of microbicide research activities at the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

What do we do now?

Now we prepare to start again. In January, the 108th Congress will be sworn in. We need to tell them now -- before they arrive -- that we want them to make reintroduction of similar legislation a high priority in January. We need to thank our allies and let them know that we'll be looking for an even higher level of support from them next year. Those new to Congress, and those who weren't our allies in the past, need to know before they get on the plane to DC that AIDS isn't going away and neither are we. The fight may be uphill but that just means that more of us than ever are needed.

December 1 is World AIDS Day. Make a call, send an e-mail, recruit a friend. In the words of Joe Hill, a great organizer in the American labor union movement, "Don't mourn. Organize!"

Cervical Cancer Vaccine Holds Hope

Excerpted from: Jeff Donn, Associated Press, November 22, 2002

BOSTON (AP) -- Early testing shows an experimental vaccine to be highly effective against HPV a virus that causes cervical cancer, reports Jeff Donn of the Associated Press. The findings were published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

Vaccines work by teaching the body's immune defenses to recognize invading viruses and bacteria. Most types of cancer, by contrast, are blamed largely on genetic mutations and environmental factors. However, virtually all cases of cervical cancer are caused by a sexually transmitted virus - the human papilloma virus.

A vaccine for cervical cancer is urgently being sought because the disease strikes about 450,000 women worldwide each year, killing about half. It is the leading cancer killer of women in the developing world. In the United States, where Pap tests are widely used for screening, it develops in about 15,000 women annually and kills about a third.

The new vaccine, aimed at the viral strain Type 16 responsible for about half the cases of cervical cancer, was tested on women ages 16 to 23 at 16 sites around the country in a study led by Merck & Co. and the University of Washington. Merck developed the vaccine and funded the research. The women were watched on average for almost a year and a half.

Of 768 women who got vaccine injections, none showed Type 16 infections or precancerous tissue. Of 765 who took dummy injections, 41 came down with persistent infections, and nine developed precancerous tissue.

Inoculated women built up almost 60 times the concentration of virus-fighting antibodies seen in naturally infected women. Some researchers had suspected that the mucous membrane on the cervix would pose a barrier to such antibodies. Such a vaccine could also stop other harm done by the virus, including genital warts in both men and women and rare forms of penile, anal, vaginal and oral cancer. Researchers said the vaccine might also be taken by men to keep them from infecting their female partners.

However, it is still unclear as to how long the vaccine will protect individuals. Continued studies are being done in the US, Latin America, Europe, Asia and Australia. Researchers estimate that the vaccine could be on the market in five years.

AIDS Leading Cause of Death Among South African Women

From: Kaiser Daily AIDS Report, November 22, 2002.

AIDS-related illnesses are now the leading cause of death among South African women ages 15 to 39, accounting for nearly 10% of deaths among South African women, according to new figures released by Statistics South Africa, SABCNews.com reports. In addition, the proportion of South African deaths due to AIDS-related causes almost doubled from 4.6% in 1997 to 8.7% in 2001 (Lang, SABCNews.com, 11/21). The South African Cabinet commissioned the report following last year's Medical Research Council report that indicated that 40% of all deaths among South Africans ages 15 to 49 were due to AIDS-related causes. Statistics South Africa "repudiated" MRC's findings, and South African President Thabo Mbeki said deaths due to AIDS-related causes were "being exaggerated," according to the South African Press Association. David Bourne, an MRC consultant, said that the SSA and MRC reports are not necessarily inconsistent because "[m]easuring mortality because of AIDS will always be an inexact science." He added, "The results of both reports are in line with broad trends emerging. HIV as an underlying cause of death is certainly rising and is predominant among the young." In addition,

Bourne said that the MRC "went further" in their study than SSA by "modeling" findings based on information already known about HIV/AIDS. He added that many deaths attributed to influenza or other illnesses were likely caused by AIDS. In response to the SSA report, South African health officials indicated that the country needs to "step up" its fight against HIV/AIDS, according to SAPA (South African Press Association, 11/21). For more articles on AIDS in South Africa, click on:
www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=14731