



Global Campaign News – Issue #48 February 1, 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>

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Report on the Eighth Alliance for Microbicide Development Meeting Research

On January 13th and 14th, the Alliance for Microbicide Development convened its eighth meeting to bring together scientists, researchers, policy makers and advocates in the microbicide field to exchange information and discuss critical issues. The first day of meetings was divided up as follows:

- *Policy and Advocacy*: Updates on cost models, impact modeling, regulatory meeting in India, U.S. legislative activity, and the Global Campaign’s advocacy efforts.
- *Research and Development Updates*: Information about the Alliance’s Microbicide R&D Database and updates from the International Partnership for Microbicides and the U.S. government (NIAID, CDC, and NICHD)
- *Clinical Updates* from U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Microbicide Coordinating Board, Family Health International, Microbicide Development Programme, U.S. Agency for International Development, Population Council, and Global Microbicide Project/CONRAD.
- *Key Scientific Issues for the Field* including a report on a pre-meeting about evaluating surface-active candidates, issues on resistance, and rectal microbicides.

The second day of the meeting was formulated as a “Mini-Summit” on social and behavioral data collection in microbicides trials. In particular, the summit included:

- *Why Behavioral Research Matters*: the role of behavioral data in Phase III trials, regulators’ perspectives, and sponsors’ perspectives.
- *Informed Consent*: Researchers provided details about why informed consent is so important and how their trials were going about achieving informed consent through a variety of tools and strategies.
- *Theories, Tools, and Strategies for Gathering Behavioral Data*: Presentations covered triangulation, scales, surveys, used-applicator assays, coital diary strategies, secret ballots, specific issues in rectal studies, collaboration in sharing data.

Instead of attempting to cover all of the meeting outcomes in one edition of GC News, we will be highlighting research studies and findings of particular interest in the next several editions. The first feature appears in this edition: The Phoenix Project at Fenway Community Health.

In addition, the Alliance will provide notes and highlights in the next edition of The Microbicide Quarterly, available on-line in Spring 2005 at <http://www.microbicide.org/publications/quarterly.shtml>

British government pledges to double HIV research funding over next 10 years

Europe

On an extensive tour of Africa, the British Chancellor Gordon Brown set out a bold agenda for a \$100 billion plan to fight HIV over the next ten years. He called for the global community to put resources in place that would mirror the international human genome project.

The comprehensive plan includes an ambitious global HIV/AIDS research platform that would provide a worldwide infrastructure for sharing and coordinating research in AIDS and then for encouraging the development of viable drugs, vaccines and other technologies such as microbicides.

Mr. Brown claimed the world should make fighting HIV/AIDS one of its top priorities by devoting a fifth of international aid money to research and treatment. He further announced that it was his personal and his government's ambition to secure a preventive vaccine by 2015 and that he and the Italian finance minister are inviting other countries to explore a jointly agreed advance purchase scheme to make future HIV vaccines accessible to Africa.

"I believe that the generation that provides the finance to combat, cure and eradicate the world's deadliest disease of today - and today the world's least curable disease - HIV/AIDS - will rightly earn the title 'the great generation'," Mr. Brown said in his speech in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

“Creams, Sex and AIDS”: Introducing microbicide advocacy in Spain

Europe

Parallel to the Spanish National AIDS Congress that took place last November 2004 in Madrid, two Global Campaign partners, Creación Positiva and gTt, organised the first symposium on microbicides advocacy in Spain. The event, entitled “Creams, Sex and AIDS: NGOs’ involvement in HIV Microbicides”, took place on November 25th, 2004 and was co-sponsored by the Global Campaign for Microbicides. Approximately 60 participants from Spanish NGOs and CBOs, family planning networks, gay men’s health groups, and health care providers attended.

Dr. Robin Shattock from the Medical School of St. George Hospital in London, opened the programme with a lecture on why microbicides are necessary and what the chances are that such products will be developed in a near future. Sessions included presentations on:

- What microbicides are and how they work, as well as their limitations;
- The implication of their introduction into current programmes on HIV/AIDS prevention in Spain;
- The situation of microbicide advocacy in Spain, with examples of Creación Positiva and gTt’s activities and publications in this particular field.

Rebekah Webb spoke about the Global Campaign and the “Who is Who” in the microbicide field. She also offered a practical overview of the local and international resources for microbicide advocacy. The programme was followed by a lively discussion and a reception for both participants and speakers to get to know each other and informally exchange views.

Global Campaign Job Announcement

North America

The Global Campaign for Microbicides is seeking an energetic, responsible, quick learner to join our team as program assistant in our Washington D.C. office. The program assistant will be the Campaign’s information assistant and provide general team support. Responsibilities will include:

- Maintaining our database, media files, vendor relations and educational materials
- Drafting articles for our electronic newsletter
- Assisting in website maintenance
- Organizing meeting and event logistics

Qualifications:

- AA degree in business, women’s studies, health sciences, or communications preferred
- Minimum of 1 to 2 years directly related experience
- Proven ability to work efficiently and independently, especially on routine tasks
- Demonstrated excellent organization skills
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Extensive experience with Microsoft Office and its applications
- Significant experience with internet-based research
- Flexible and adaptable to changing priorities
- Demonstrated ability to be persistent, pay attention to details, and be self-motivated
- Proven ability to take initiative and be creative in solving problems
- Strong interpersonal skills and commitment to team work

For the full job description and to apply, go to <http://www.path.org/about/jobs.php> and click on Job #1590. Please send this announcement to any qualified individuals who are looking for a challenging entry level position!

The Phoenix Project at Fenway Community Health Research

Founded in Boston in 1971 as a free clinic, Fenway Community Health has developed into the largest provider of medical and mental health care and community education for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender individuals in New England. Fenway also operates one of the nation’s first community-based HIV research programs and has been conducting long-term epidemiological research since 1985.

Under the leadership of Dr. Kenneth Mayer, Fenway Community Health was named an HIV Prevention and Treatment Network (HPTN) site by the National Institutes of Health in July 2000. In collaboration with Miriam Hospital and Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, Fenway has conducted clinical microbicide research on investigational products including Buffer Gel, PRO 2000/5, PMPA Gel and Cellulose Sulfate. In addition, Fenway has worked with our Rhode Island collaborators as well as YRG Care in Chennai, India, to conduct microbicide acceptability research.



Currently, Fenway is a site for The Phoenix Project – a vaginal microbicide acceptability trial funded by the National Institutes of Mental Health. This project was conceptualized by Principal Investigator Kate Morrow, PhD at The Miriam Hospital/ Brown Medical School, Providence, Rhode Island. The Phoenix Project is also being conducted in Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts by the Miriam Hospital team, and in the greater Bridgeport, CT area as well as the New York City metropolitan area by Sociomedical Research Associates.

The Phoenix Project is a study designed to facilitate our understanding of what would be acceptable to women in a vaginal microbicide product. Specifically, the project hopes to identify which variables best predict the uptake and use of products such as microbicides and to develop a quantitative research tool to “measure” these factors. The tool will consider product and applicator-related factors; factors associated with use, the environment and hygiene; as well as economic and relationship-related factors.

The Phoenix Project hopes that by better understanding how these factors interact to influence use and developing an instrument to measure them, they can advance our understanding of microbicide acceptability and inform educational strategies for introducing a vaginal microbicide to at-risk populations in a user-friendly manner.

The Phoenix Project is administering a one-time questionnaire to approximately 500 female participants in Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. This survey asks questions about a woman's use of vaginal products, her sexual partners and relationships, her opinions about sex, and her thoughts about microbicides.

The survey is confidential, is completed on a computer with audio assistance, and women do not need to have prior familiarity with computers in order to participate.

Eligibility requirements for The Phoenix Project include being between 18-55 years of age, heterosexually active in the last 12 months, and female. Women are compensated for their participation in The Phoenix Project and may contact the phone line to take part - 888/242-0900 ext. 5555 in MA, 877/401-7800 in RI, or 888/242-6797 in CT and NY. For more information about the Phoenix Project, please contact Phoenix Project Principal Investigator Kate Morrow, PhD at 401/793-8180.

EC Leader declares importance of microbicide advocacy Europe

Dr. Lieve Fransen, Head of the Human and Social Development Unit for the European Commission's Directorate-General for Development, made some strong comments on the need for microbicide advocacy in the current issue of *Choices* (a publication of the International Planned Parenthood Federation's European Network). A physician, researcher and current Board Member for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Dr. Fransen spoke to *Choices* about the European Union's current and future role in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Her comments reflect the EU's progressive and pragmatic response to date, as signaled by the Dublin Declaration last February (see GC News <http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/GCNews32.pdf>) and the newly seated European Commission and European Parliament commitment to maintaining this response.

Reflecting on her 20 years of confronting AIDS in Africa and elsewhere, and her current role as a policy maker, Dr Fransen said, "What I learned from this was that each country has to go through the same phases of facing the epidemic – denial, complacency, anger, urgency...Because of this reality, transferring lessons-learned from one country to another is difficult. I can say, though, that it helps a great deal if the political leadership can get past the denial phase quickly."

In regard to the need for microbicide advocacy, she observed that, "We should make more investments in microbicide research and production, and we should prepare women for microbicides. We did a study with women in 11 countries that showed a lot of interest in microbicides. This tells me that the forward momentum needs to continue, especially with women's advocates...it's women's organizations that have to take action. I come from a generation of women's groups where there was much more energy for issues affecting women. Where HIV is on the agenda, it is because of people living with HIV and gay groups. Sixty per cent of people living with HIV are women, but they are not vocal. I hope that young women will begin to speak out."

The European Women's Lobby (made up of 4000 member associations in 25 European countries) passed a motion at their 2004 annual meeting to begin microbicide advocacy and ten more European NGOs endorsed the Global Campaign during the last quarter of 2004. Partially in response to this escalating public demand for microbicides, six European governments, as well as the European Commission, have invested in microbicide research and development to date. For the complete text of Dr. Fransen's interview, see: <http://www.global-campaign.org/europedia.htm>

Genre Article on Rectal Microbicides Media Highlight

The Jan/Feb 2005 edition of *Genre*, an American monthly magazine targeted to gay men, features a very readable two page article on rectal microbicides. Sarah Albert, the author of the article "Orifice Politics" speaks to microbicides scientists and advocates about the politics of rectal microbicides, the need for both vaginal and rectal microbicides, scientific challenges, acceptability research, and status of clinical studies. The edition will be available on-line in the coming weeks at www.genremagazine.com

We welcome your input and contributions for future issues!
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