

Treatment Rollout, Pathogenesis and Ageing Featured in Monday Plenary

The opening plenary of IAS 2007 explores three distinct, yet important issues emerging in the global response to HIV. With calls for universal access by 2010 as the backdrop, the Director of the World Bank's Global HIV/AIDS Program, Dr. Debrework Zewdie, begins the session with a report on progress of antiretroviral therapy (ART) rollout in the developing world. Dr. Zewdie will discuss some of the complexities and specific challenges related to treatment scale-up in particular regions and among specific populations, including men who have sex with men, commercial sex workers and injecting drug users. She will emphasize that the intellectual distinction between treatment and prevention is a false dichotomy, which must be rejected. In particular, she will point to the direct preventive effects of treatment, and other synergies between treatment and prevention programs that call for greater integration of the two programme areas.

Dr. Zewdie will describe the importance of research in developing sustainable HIV treatment programmes, including the role of operations research in strategic planning and capacity building. Some of the specific research questions she will examine include the impact of treatment rollout on the major co-infections of TB, sexually transmitted infections, hepatitis and malaria. Dr. Zewdie will make a case for the integration of effective and sustained research into HIV treatment programs and conclude with a call for action.

Following Dr. Zewdie will be Dr. Michael Lederman, Scott R. Inkley Professor of Medicine and Professor of Pathology, Molecular Biology/Microbiology and Biomedical Ethics at Case Western Reserve University. As Dr. Lederman will explain, while there is no doubt that HIV is the cause of AIDS, we still do not understand exactly how HIV infection causes progressive immune deficiency.

According to Dr. Lederman, there is increasing evidence that immune activation – the process by which a person experiences a boost in virus replication when the immune system is activated by a stimulus such as a parasite, other micro-organism, or HIV itself – is an important driver of the loss of white blood cells leading to progressive immune deficiency. Unraveling the mechanisms whereby HIV infection results in immune activation and cell losses may help to identify strategies that could block the progression of immune deficiency in early infection, enhance immune responses in persons who have had incomplete immune restoration after suppressive ART, and help restore immune responses in persons who fail ART.

The final plenary speaker is Dr. Brian Gazzard, founder and chairperson of the British HIV Association and a consultant at St. Stephen's Centre at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. Dr. Gazzard's address will focus on the increasing prevalence of HIV in older age groups, as individuals with this (*continued overleaf*)

URGENT CALL FOR NEW TB RESEARCH

Tuberculosis (TB) kills approximately two million people every year, and is the leading cause of death among people with HIV. Each illness builds on the devastation caused by the other, with the most extreme effects seen in the regions least equipped to cope, according to participants in a satellite sponsored by the TB/HIV Working Group of the Stop TB Partnership. Underscoring the urgent need for better diagnosis, Renee Ridzon of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation observed, "It's not a question *if* people in Africa will get TB but *when*."

Sunday's satellite, entitled *HIV/TB Co-Infection: Meeting the Challenge*, was convened to discuss critical gaps in research on the intersection of the two pandemics, made even more urgent by the recent emergence of extensively drug resistant TB (XDR-TB). Organizers are hopeful that major HIV funders will help fill these gaps, given the deadly implications of TB for people living with HIV. According to Michel Sidibe, Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS, who was a participant in the meeting, an estimated \$2 billion would be needed annually to make a quick and major difference.

A Monday oral abstract session (*MOABI, 11:00, Bayside Auditorium B*) will feature five oral abstract presentations on the topic of HIV/TB co-infection.

Abbott Drops Lawsuit Against Act Up-Paris

The International AIDS Society (IAS) convened and facilitated a meeting between Act Up-Paris and Abbott yesterday, on the opening day of the 4th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention.

At the meeting Act-Up Paris and Abbott put forward their points of view regarding important issues related to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The two organizations agreed that their most important priority is to promote access to HIV prevention, treatment and care globally. They also agreed that access to information is important through all available communications channels (including websites and other media).

Abbott agreed to drop its lawsuit pending against Act Up-Paris. The two organizations committed to have future discussions on issues of importance to each of them.

An additional statement, issued by Act Up-Paris, is available on the conference website at www.ias2007.org.

AUSTRALIA'S HIV RESPONSE

The past six years has seen a transformation in the pattern of HIV infections in Sydney, Australia's premier city. In 2006, Sydney was one of the world's few urban centres to record a downturn in new HIV infections among men who have sex with men (MSM), in stark contrast to the situation in the same city just six years earlier. Unfortunately, this decline in new infections was not echoed in Australia's other major cities.

In a satellite session on Sunday, a multidisciplinary panel discussed the reasons why Sydney has bucked national and international trends. Australian experts canvassed the issues related to HIV prevention, treatment and care, with an emphasis on effective partnerships. Participants also identified the successful strategies that can be transferred to different settings.

Professor Dennis Altman, of La Trobe University, spoke about the lessons Australia's HIV response holds for other countries, and Professor Susan Kippax, head of Australia's National Centre in HIV Social Research, described the social behaviour research and behavioural surveillance conducted in NSW and in other centres. Stevie Clayton from the AIDS Council of NSW and Scott Berry from People Living with HIV/AIDS NSW identified issues arising from community engagement and in prevention.

The local clinical picture and successes in treatment and care were discussed by Professor Basil Donovan of the Sydney Sexual Health Centre and the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research (NCHECR). Sydney's successful needle and syringe exchange programme was described by Dr. Alex Wodak of St Vincent's Hospital, who also discussed working with IDUs.

Professor Andrew Grulich, an NCHECR epidemiologist working in HIV-related cancer, also spoke at the session, which was sponsored by NSW Health and NCHECR.

(from page 1) infection live longer. New cases of HIV also occur in old age. Dr. Gazzard will describe how, prior to the advent of antiretroviral treatment, the immunological changes associated with HIV mirrored those seen in the elderly, suggesting that HIV per se may accelerate the process of aging.

According to Dr. Gazzard, many of the "geriatric giants," such as cardiovascular disease, neoplasia and dementia, are associated with HIV infection. He posits that there may be a synergistic interaction between the effects of HIV and aging, thereby inducing an accelerated rate of these degenerative diseases. In his remarks, Dr. Gazzard also will discuss how age is known to be one of the factors reducing the effects of antiretroviral therapy.

Today's plenary begins at 9:00 in Bayside Auditorium B. A webcast of this session will be available on the conference website later in the day.

Programme Updates: Monday 23 July

Session: **MOSS1** - 13:00-14:00

Paul Volberding, United States, will be co-chairing this session with **Alan Street**.

Session: **MOSY2** - 16:30-18:00

MOSY204 speaker Richard Harrigan will be replaced by **Julio Montaner**, Canada.

Session: **MOPDX** - 13:00-14:00

MOPDX will be presented by **John Wilkinson**, Australia.

Monday Highlights

Treatment of Early HIV Disease

14:30, Bayside Auditorium B

NIAID Director Dr. Anthony Fauci chairs this timely symposium exploring the vital clinical question about the optimal point in disease progression to initiate ART. A conservative approach is taken in recommendations because of concerns about long-term toxicities, adherence, and resistance. This session will explore a spectrum of views relating to the basis, feasibility and relevance of early treatment trials in the modern era.

Ethics in Biomedical Prevention

14:30, Parkside Auditorium

This session addresses emerging ethical issues in research on new biomedical prevention strategies (Dr. Jeremy Sugarman, US); the ethics of suppressing HIV replication in infected individuals to protect their uninfected partners (Dr. Jean-Pierre Routy, Canada); the use of a continuous consent process among high-risk women in Tanzania (Dr. Andrew Vallely, Tanzania); and ethical considerations related to the provision of care and treatment in vaccine trials (Prof. Daniel Tarantola, Australia).

HIV Prevention Among IDUs

11:00, Parkside Auditorium

In a panel of oral abstract presentations today, researchers specializing in the implications of injecting drug use and the HIV epidemic will discuss a broad range of topics, including needle exchange programs, opioid substitution therapy, and trends in risk-taking behaviour.

Special Session: New Data and International Antiretroviral Therapy Guidelines

13:00, Bayside Auditorium B

Delegates can participate in this interactive session on new ART data and its implications for treatment guidelines. Speakers include Dr. Mauro Schechter, Brazil (Initial ART, when to start, what to start); Dr. Michael Saag, US (Managing antiretroviral failure and the IAS-USA and other developed world guidelines); and Dr. Alexandra Calmy, Australia (Implications of new data on WHO guidelines for the developing world).

ANRS/IAS Prizes Announced

This award is co-sponsored by the Agence Nationale de Recherches sur le SIDA (ANRS) and the International AIDS Society, to recognize young researchers who demonstrate excellence in research related to the scale-up of prevention and treatment services in resource-limited settings. "Conducting meaningful research in the parts of the world most impacted by HIV/AIDS contributes to a richer global understanding of the epidemic," said Jean-Francois Delfraissy, Director of the ANRS.

The winning authors must be under 35 years old and a citizen of a non-OECD country. The research must have been carried out in a non-OECD country. The 2007 prize winners are **Dmytro Kovalsky, Ukraine** (Track A: HIV Basic Science); **Apollo Basenero, Uganda** (Track B: Clinical Research, Treatment and Care) and **Lu Yin, China** (Track C: Biomedical Prevention). Congratulations!