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ABOUT ACTION

The AIDS Clinical Trials Information and Orientation Network (ACTION) provides information and resources to those interested in HIV/AIDS clinical trials and supports an active community voice in local HIV/AIDS research. ACTION is a project of the DC CARE Consortium.

FOR MORE INFO:


David Mariner
ACTION Coordinator
DC CARE Consortium
1156 15th Street NW Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
www.fighthivindc.org/action

dmariner@dccare.org

202 223-9550 ext 15

a project of
DC CARE CONSORTIUM

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HIV/AIDS Administration

National Latino HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is a Success



The District of Columbia had two great events for National Latino AIDS Awareness Day. In the morning a coalition of groups, spearheaded by La Clinica Del Pueblo, organized a community forum on HIV/AIDS in the Latino Community in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. In addition to hearing some compelling stories from people living with HIV, representatives were on hand from the Departments of Health in Maryland, Virginia, and DC.

In the afternoon, ACTION hosted had a spanish-language presentation on HIV Vaccine Research. Jeff Stanton, from the Academy for Educational Development, discussed community involvement in HIV Vaccine Research. Pedro Goicochea, from IMPACTA Peru (www.impactaperu.org), discussed HIV Vaccine Research in Peru; and Dr. Barney Graham, from the discussed HIV Vaccine Research here in DC.

To learn more about National Latino AIDS Awareness Day, visit www.nlaad.org.

DC HIV/AIDS Resource Day is a Success



Twenty one organizations co-sponsored the DC Fights Back Resource Day, held on November 3rd at the Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Dr. Shannon Hader, the new Director of the HIV/AIDS Administration, provided opening remarks. Panelists spoke about resources currently available, and resources needed in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the District. Panelists included Patricia Nalls, Womens Collective; Geno Dunington, Prevention Works; Arnita Wilson, Metro Teen AIDS, Renee Kelly, Housing Counseling Services, and Deborah Hagans, RAP Inc.

Update: Open Letter on Sex and Gender

Jessica Xavier and David Mariner met with representatives of the Community Partners (<http://studysource.org/community>) this month to discuss the Open Letter on Sex and Gender. Community Partners is a community input board made up of community representatives from all six NIH NIAID Division of AIDS funded research networks.

The Open Letter encourages Community Partners to make recommendations to the Division of AIDS so that HIV/AIDS research better reflects the needs of transgender trial participants. Four local HIV/AIDS research community advisory boards (CABS) signed on to the letter: Washington VA Medical Center CAB (INSIGHT Network), Georgetown University Medical Center CAB (ACTG Network), Capital Area Vaccine Effort (VRC), and Howard University Hospital CAB (IMPAACT Network). CAB members are hopeful that Community Partners will take action on this issue soon.

Upcoming Events

November 3rd – The Metropolitan Washington Public Health Association and DC Fights Back will hold a Speakout and Neighborhood March. For details, visit: www.dcfightsback.org.

November 6th – Capital Area Vaccine Effort (CAVE) monthly CAB meeting. 6:30 PM at Us Helping Us, 3636 Georgia Ave NW. Visit www.aidsvaccine.org for more information.

November 12th – Word Up (National HIV Behavioral Surveillance, NHBS) CAB Meeting. 5:30 PM, Anacostia Professional Building Lower Level Community Room, 2401 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE.

November 15th – ACTION LUNCH. Washington DC 2001-2006 HIV Surveillance Report presented by Tiffany West-Ojo. 1:00 PM at the DC CARE Consortium, 1156 15th St, Suite 500. To RSVP call 202 223 9550 ext 15. or e-mail dmariner@dccare.org.

November 15th - Art for Life, the 14th Annual Art Auction to benefit Whitman Walker Clinic's services for the Latino community, will take place at the Organization of American States, 17th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW. The reception begins at 6:30 PM. For details visit www.wwc.org.

November 17th – Homeownership workshop for people living with HIV. From 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the Housing Counseling Services Training Center located at 2410 17th Street NW Suite 100. Please call Jill Carmichael or Minerva Lazo from Housing Counseling Services, Inc at (202) 667-2681 for more information

November 17th – Metro TeenAIDS names Chantel Christie as Youth Ambassador. 2:00 P.M. at the Hill Crest Recreation Center, 1300 Denver Street, SE.

November 28th – Howard University Hospital Pediatric Clinic Community Advisory Board Meeting. 10:30 AM. All are welcome. Contact Patty Yu at phouston@howard.edu or (202) 865-4578.



November 17th – December 3rd – Our Heroes Art Exhibit. This photography collection will be on display at the Metropolitan Community Church, 474 Ridge St, NW. On December 1st, it will be displayed at the Human Rights Campaign Headquarters, 1640 Rhode Island Ave, NW. For more information, contact Wallace Corbett at 202 257-1484 or blackdcbiker@yahoo.com.

Wednesday November 28th – HIV Town Hall. 6:30 PM at the Armour J. Blackburn Center's East Ballroom at Howard University (HU). The Blackburn Center is located at 2397 Sixth St., N.W., Washington, DC 20059. This event is sponsored by Us Helping Us People Into Living, Inc (UHU), and the Vaccine Research Center (VRC).

Thursday November 29th – Red Hot Night. Kimpton Hotels hosts a World AIDS Day fundraiser at Urbana Restaurant & Wine Bar at Hotel Palomar, 2121 P St., NW, at 6:00 pm. \$10.00 cover includes two drink tickets and hors d'oeuvres. All proceeds will benefit Whitman-Walker Clinic.

Friday November 30th – WWC Candlelight Vigil. Whitman-Walker's annual candlelight vigil will be Friday, Nov. 30, at 5:30 pm at Dupont Circle.

Friday November 30th – Free HIV Testing. Free HIV testing will be available on Friday, Nov. 30, at the Elizabeth Taylor Medical Center, 1701 14th St., NW, from 8:30 am - 5:00 pm; at the Max Robinson Center, 2301 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE, from 9:30 am - 4:00 pm; and at Whitman-Walker Clinic of Northern Virginia, 5232 Lee Highway in Arlington, from 8:00 am - 5:00 pm.

Friday November 30th – Concert for Life. Northern Virginia AIDS Ministry (NOVAM) will mark World AIDS Day this year with 'Concert for Life', featuring performances by Jason & deMarco, the Howard University Gospel Choir, and the Unity Fellowship & Shaman Tigre Drum Ministries. The concert will take place at 7:30, Friday, November 30 at the Kenmore Auditorium, 200 S. Carlin Springs Drive, Arlington, VA 22204. Tickets range from \$30-75 and can be purchased by calling 703-533-5505 x13.

Saturday December 1st – 'Everyone's Birthday'. Friends for a Cause in partnership with Us Helping Us present this 2007 World AIDS Day Benefit; a night of elegance, education, and entertainment featuring 'The Godmother' Lil' Mo and American Idol's Frenchie Davis. 9:00 PM to 3:00 AM at the Human Rights Campaign Building, 1640 Rhode Island Ave, NW. For ticket purchase and information contact: Us Helping Us at (202) 446-1100, Us Helping Us

Spotlight: Microbicide Research

written by David Mariner, special thanks to Jim Pickett and Anna Forbes

What is a Microbicide?

A microbicide is a product designed to prevent or greatly reduce the risk of acquiring HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) during sexual activity. Many potential microbicides are now being tested, but none have been proven to be effective.

Virtually all of these products are 'topical' microbicides. A topical microbicide can take many forms, such as a foam, cream, or gel, which is applied directly to the vagina or rectum. It could also be a suppository (medication that is inserted into a body cavity like the vagina or rectum).

You may also hear people use the term 'oral' microbicide. This refers to a pill that could be taken (swallowed) to prevent the transmission of HIV and other STD's. Tenofovir, a drug that is now widely used in treatment of HIV and AIDS, is currently being tested for possible use as such a product that HIV-negative people could take regularly to reduce their risk of HIV infection.

A Possible New Tool in the Prevention Toolbox

If a microbicide is discovered, it would be a welcome addition to current HIV prevention tools. It would not, however, replace other prevention tools like male condoms, female condoms, dental dams, or latex gloves. The proper and consistent use of a condom during intercourse is still your best bet for preventing HIV transmission, and that is unlikely to change even if a microbicide is found.

In fact, it's likely that the first microbicide (or HIV Vaccine) to be developed will only be partially effective. A partially effective microbicide doesn't sound very promising, but it could actually have a huge impact on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. Experts suggest that over a three year period, a partially effective microbicide could prevent well over two million HIV infections worldwide.¹

For those who consistently use condoms, a microbicide could be used as an added preventive measure. For those who, for whatever reason, do not always use condoms, a microbicide could be used alone to reduce risk of HIV transmission.

Women & Vaginal Microbicides

Male-to-female transmission of HIV and female-to-male transmission of HIV are not the same. Women are twice as likely as men to contract HIV from a single act of unprotected sex because of their biological differences.² This is one reason women are disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS.

In the United States women comprise a growing share of new AIDS cases each year. The proportion of AIDS cases among women has more than tripled since 1986 from 7% to 23%.³ In sub-Saharan Africa, women make up 57% of those living with HIV, and 75% of young people infected are women and girls.⁴

New HIV prevention strategies for women are clearly needed. A microbicide is one such strategy. For millions of women around the world, negotiating condom use with a partner can be extremely difficult, if not impossible. A microbicide would help to address this by empowering women to take action and reduce their risk of HIV infection on their own.

Microbicides would not just benefit women, though. In theory, such a microbicide could also prevent HIV transmission from a woman to her male partner.

Rectal Microbicides

Less research has been done on rectal microbicides, than vaginal microbicides. Unfortunately, just because a microbicide works vaginally, does not mean it will also work rectally. There are many differences between the rectum and vagina which include:

¹ Topical Microbicides, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, June, 2003 note: the Global Campaign for Microbicides, apparently looking at the same study (AIDS Volume 17:1227-1237, May 23, 2002) puts this number at 2.5 million.

² The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. Media Briefing Report. (Available on-line at http://womenandaids.unaids.org/themes/theme_7.html).

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, Year-End Editions, 1986, 1999

⁴ UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNIFEM. Women and HIV/AIDS: Confronting the Crisis, 2004.

- The vagina is an enclosed space, while the anus, rectum, and colon are continuous and open-ended.
- The vaginal epithelium (membrane tissue) is 40 cell layers thick, while the epithelium of the rectum is only 1 cell layer thick, and therefore more fragile.
- The human vagina is a moderately acidic environment, the rectum is not; Both have different ecologies.⁵

What works as an effective vaginal microbicide, could actually be harmful if used rectally. We cannot make any assumptions. Clearly it will be important to test microbicides for safety in both environments and to educate consumers about the differences that may exist.

Rectal microbicide research will be crucial for gay, bisexual, and transgender men, but many others will benefit from this research as well. One study showed that among a group of women at high risk for becoming HIV positive, 32% had engaged in anal intercourse.⁶

The State of Microbicide Research

There are approximately 60 candidates, or potential microbicides, in development. Of these, approximately 20 are in clinical trials.⁷ Most of this research is funded by the public sector (like our federal government and other countries) and philanthropic organizations (like non-profit organizations). Pharmaceutical companies have traditionally shied away from microbicide out of concerns including the scientific feasibility, the demand for a microbicide, and the profit margins.⁸ This, however, is starting to change.

Investment in Microbicide research and development has grown significantly in the past few years. In 2000, public and philanthropic investment in vaccine research totaled \$66 million. In 2004, that number rose to \$140 million. In 2004, the United States accounted for about 75% of total investments in microbicides.⁹

70% of all United States funding for Microbicide research and development is through the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NIH supports microbicide research in part, through the HIV Prevention Trials Network (www.hptn.org).¹⁰

For more information on Microbicide Research

Alliance for Microbicide Development

8484 Georgia Ave, Suite 940, Silver Spring, MD 20910
 (301) 587-9690
www.microbicide.org

The Alliance for Microbicide Development is a global, non-profit organization whose sole mission is to speed the development of safe, effective, and affordable microbicides to prevent sexually transmitted infections, most critically HIV/AIDS.

Global Campaign for Microbicides (c/o PATH)

1800 K Street NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20006
 (202) 822-0033
www.global-campaign.org

The Global Campaign for Microbicides is a broad-based, international effort to build support among policymakers, opinion leaders, and the general public for increased investment into microbicides and other user-controlled prevention methods.

⁵ These three bullet points are adapted from the presentation: Shake That Booty, No One Left Behind: Rectal Microbicides, LifeLube, and the Fight for the Next Generation HIV Prevention, Jim Picket, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, May 24th, 2005

⁶ Gross M, Holte SE, Marmor M, et al. Anal sex among HIV-seronegative women at high risk of HIV exposure. The HIVNET Vaccine Preparedness Study 2 Protocol Team, *Journal of AIDS*, 24(4):393-8,2000.

⁷ Shake That Booty, No One Left Behind: Rectal Microbicides, LifeLube, and the Fight for the Next Generation HIV Prevention, Jim Picket, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, May 24th, 2005

⁸ Preparing for Microbicide Access and Use, A Report by the Access Working Group of the Microbicide Initiative funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, 2000

⁹ Public and Philanthropic Investments, *The Microbicide Quarterly*, Alliance for Microbicide Development. January, February, March, 2005 v.3 no.1 page 18.

¹⁰ Public and Philanthropic Investments, *The Microbicide Quarterly*, Alliance for Microbicide Development. January, February, March, 2005 v.3 no.1 page 18.

Washington, DC 2001-2006 HIV Surveillance Report

Tiffany West-Ojo, MPH, MSPH, Interim Bureau Chief, Bureau of Surveillance and Epidemiology HIV/AIDS Administration



Thursday, November 15th

1:00 PM

DC CARE Consortium

1156 15th Street NW Suite 500

Join us for a detailed look at this important new information about HIV and AIDS cases in the District of Columbia. RSVP to David Mariner at dmariner@dccare.org or 202 223-9550, ext 15.