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PAHO Launches Regional Treatment Guidelines for Adults

The Guidelines for antiretroviral treatment in adults for countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that PAHO is launching in April are a response to numerous requests from health authorities concerning how to improve antiretroviral treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS in the region. The publication in the developing countries is the perception that these countries should be prepared to follow the guides produced in the richest countries, including the initial availability of all the antiretroviral agents and the broad access to the utilization of the viral load. This regional protocol is a tool that contributes in solving this dilemma and also quantifies the needs for antiretrovirals in the countries. The document should be available by the end of April at:

<http://www.paho.org/spanish/hcp/hca/protocoloarv.pdf> (Spanish) and

<http://www.paho.org/english/hcp/hca/protocolarv.pdf> (English).

Preparing for the Second GFATM Round

PAHO offices in Latin America and the Caribbean and the regional programs on AIDS, TB and malaria plan to be intensively involved in helping the preparation of the second round of proposals for the GFATM. For the first round, closed 10 March, PAHO provided ongoing

communication and information about the Fund, surveyed countries to determine interest in applying, and provided technical support in both developing and reviewing proposals. In spite of aspects that remain unclear about the GFATM and of the short time to prepare the proposals for the first round, the experience was considered successful, particularly taking into account the substantial number of proposals submitted from LAC: 26, coming from 17 countries and one subregion. The region was also represented with three seats in the technical committee that reviews the proposals: Dr. Fabio Luelmo from Argentina, Dr. Valdilea Veloso from Brazil, and Dr. Sarah J. Gordon from Guyana.

"Respuesta Latina": Regional Calendar of HIV/AIDS Events Launched

"Respuesta Latina" an interagency, web-based calendar of regional HIV/AIDS events was launched in April by PAHO/WHO. The calendar offers a place for institutions working in the response to AIDS in LAC to share information about meetings, workshops and conferences of regional interest. In the first phase, agencies of the United Nations were invited to join the calendar, which is hosted by an independent web service. "Respuesta Latina" (<http://www.calsplus.com/sida>) already contains 15 events of regional interest for 2002. Participating institutions are able to directly post events, through a password. For those interested in participating, or to send information about events, please contact Ms. Alexandra Hernandez at hernanda@paho.org or (202) 974-3066.

Collection of ARV Prices in LAC Has April 30 Deadline

The Regional Program on AIDS/STI is once again working with PAHO country offices to collect prices of ARV in Latin America and the Caribbean. The deadline for this round of prices is April 30. Since last year PAHO has been consolidating the prices of ARV offered to the Ministries of Health in LAC and making them available at http://www.paho.org/English/HCP/HCA/antiretrovirals_HP.htm in English and http://www.paho.org/Spanish/HCP/HCA/antiretrovirals_HP.htm in Spanish.

U.S. and Caribbean Examine Impact of Migration on HIV Services

Can the US and the Caribbean health systems develop a strategy aimed at improving the quality of health services, preventing and reducing the excessive burden of HIV/AIDS? The question was discussed last March in Washington during a consultative meeting that examined the impact of immigration on HIV/AIDS health care, with emphasis on immigration from and back to the Caribbean. Organized by PAHO and HRSA (the US Health Resources and Services Administration), the meeting was also attended by representatives from PAHO's Caribbean Epidemiology Center (CAREC), as well as staff from CARE Act funded projects (which care for immigrants with HIV/AIDS from Caribbean countries), consumers of HIV/AIDS services, policymakers, administrators, and providers of HIV/AIDS services in the Caribbean. A background paper produced by PAHO prior to the meeting is available upon request and a report of the meeting is under production.

PMTCT Communication Should Go Beyond "Vertical Transmission"

Prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS (PMTCT) became a priority in LAC.

Communication is an important part of the PMTCT package. With that in mind, PAHO, UNICEF and Mexico's HIV/AIDS Program (Censida) organized a meeting to review the current experiences and make recommendations for PMTCT communications in LAC (Cuernavaca, Mexico, February 2002). Some recommendations of the Cuernavaca Consultation: 1) PMTCT communication has very complex goals and therefore requires a comprehensive, research-based planning methodology; 2) PMTCT communication should support all the three strategies of PMTCT. Currently most LAC initiatives focus exclusively on the third strategy, the "vertical transmission", at the expense of the other two strategies, primary prevention with HIV-negative women and prevention of unwanted pregnancies; 3) PMTCT communication would be more accepted, less threatening and less stigmatizing if it is integrated into existing information about ANC, MCH, family planning and IMCI. All sessions and presentations of the meeting are available on the web: <http://www.paho.org/English/HCP/HCA/pmtct.htm> (English) or <http://www.paho.org/Spanish/HCP/HCA/ptmi.htm> (Spanish).

Challenging the "HIV Challenge"

Probably one of the most important HIV meetings of the year was the "Regional Forum on the Challenge of HIV/AIDS Pandemic for the Reform and Strengthening of Health Systems and Services in LAC" (Ocho Ríos, Jamaica, February 2002). Organized by PAHO and USAID within the framework of activities related to Health Sector Reform and in the light of the increasing burden of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the health sector, the Forum had more than 100 participants representing national AIDS programs and ministries of health, representatives of bilateral and multilateral agencies, programs and organizations. One of the goals was to identify policies for the implementation of the UN recommended "prevention-care-treatment" integrated strategy, as presented in USAID's "Prevention - Care Continuum" and PAHO's "Building Blocks" guidelines. A report will be published soon. Meanwhile, a background paper, the presentations and other documents are already available at <http://www.americas.health-sector-reform.org/english/jamaica-regforum.htm> (English) and <http://www.americas.health-sector-reform.org/spanish/jamaica-regforum.htm> (Spanish).

Implementation of "Building Blocks" Takes Off

The refinement and implementation of the model "Building Blocks" depends on the continuous and integrated training of health care workers as well as of a political will that supports the model. This was one of the recommendations of a meeting that brought together specialists from most countries in the region in order to introduce and discuss the "Building Blocks" model for comprehensive care for HIV/AIDS (San Pedro Sula, Honduras, October of the 2001). Among other topics, participants analyzed the use of the model for a specific intervention, the use of antiretrovirals, and for a specific situation, co-infection HIV/TB. One suggestion that came from the discussions was to create community day care centers, a combination between day hospitals and home care. Among the countries that are developing pilot programs based on the "Building Blocks" model are Mexico, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

Guatemala Among the Pioneers to Implement "Building Blocks"

The office of PAHO in Guatemala is developing, since the last quarter of the 2001, a project to strengthen comprehensive care of people living with HIV/AIDS. The Ministry of Health has

already designated a National Commission, of interinstitutional character, with the participation of the Social Security, NGOs, organizations of HIV positive people, and scientific and medical associations. Protocols of management of opportunistic diseases are under production and a proposal for comprehensive care is being developed at the different levels of the health system of the country (primary, secondary and tertiary), based on PAHO's "Building Blocks" model. The project has funds from UNAIDS.

Young People Still Attribute a Negative Connotation to the Use of Condoms

Both PAHO offices in Bolivia and Suriname supported studies concerning the behavior of young people in relation to HIV/AIDS. The study in Bolivia demonstrated that 37-47% of the participants identified the condom as one of the principal and best-known methods for HIV and STI prevention, but also thought that its use was unpleasant. The school proved to be the most important source of information both for women and men. The focal group in Suriname revealed that the main obstacle to the use of condoms appears to be the negative meanings (mistrust, admission of illness) that are attached to condom use. The study indicated the need for HIV/AIDS prevention programs to reach out-of-school youth. Accurate and complete information using appropriate media were identified as possible solutions to reverse the negative trends identified. For more information on this project:

<http://www.comminit.com/pds01-2002/sld-3882.html>.

WHO Looks for Capacity Building Advisor

The WHO Department of HIV/AIDS, established in December 2001, is looking for a professional to work on capacity building in HIV/AIDS/STI. The 11-month post is being advertised informally. Please disseminate this information among potential candidates. The main activities to be carried out will include identification of capacity building needs; development of capacity building strategies, methodologies/tools (e.g. a training course on HIV/AIDS care), identification of staffing needs, facilitation of the recruitment of additional staff and conduction of capacity building activities. The TOR is available upon request. Further information: World Health Organization, HIV/AIDS Department, Dr. Antonio C. Gerbase, Fax: +41 22 791 4834, E-mail: gerbasea@who.ch.

The purpose of this bulletin is to share information on the efforts of PAHO professionals involved in the response to AIDS/STI. It is not an official document of the Organization. To add or remove your name from the bulletin's distribution list, contact sida@paho.org. Use this email address to contribute articles for publication. We ask the PAHO AIDS/STI focal points to send us information on events, strategies, concerns, and needs. PAHO is the regional office of WHO in the Americas and a co-sponsor of UNAIDS.



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