

- Editorial: Turning Point
- American Heads of State commit to treat 600,000
- PAHO Signs On To '3 by 5'
- Caribbean countries prepare to expand access to ART
- The Bahamas success to be documented
- PAHO Offers Support in Procurement Planning to Global Fund Recipients
- Study compares Brazil and Mexico ART scale up
- Materials promote discussion on stigma in the health sector
- Elimination of congenital syphilis in: a task within reach
- New studies on Southern Cone drug users available
- 10 countries examine best adolescent programs
- 350 health journalists join RED SALUD
- Regional calendar has four new participants
- Most frequently-used HIV/AIDS acronyms

Editorial: Turning Point

Following the eradication of polio a decade ago, the Americas is today poised to set another global public health example. Thanks to the commitment of the region's Heads of State, announced during their last Summit, the continent may also become the first to provide antiretroviral therapy to all children, men and women who need it. Achieving this target will require an extraordinary effort, but it will represent a turning point in the response to the HIV epidemic. As we move forward, let's ensure that we document lessons learned in this process and share them with other regions of the world, particularly countries and communities with fewer resources and those that are most affected by the epidemic.

Dr. Mirta Roses, Director

American Heads of State commit to treat 600,000

During the Monterrey Special Summit in Mexico last January, presidents and prime-ministers from 34 countries made a commitment to have at least 600,000 people undergoing antiretroviral treatment in the American continent by 2005. Summit participants expressed concern about the toll of the epidemic. The goal of providing universal access to ART as soon as possible and to at least 600,000 people by the year 2005 is the part of the region's contribution to the "3 by 5 Initiative" and to the Millennium Development Goals. The heads of state also recognized that their political leadership

was essential to confronting the stigma, discrimination, and fear, which has deterred people in the past from being tested and from accessing treatment and care. It is estimated that three million people live with HIV in the region of the Americas. More: http://www.summit-americas.org/SpecialSummit/declaration_monterrey-eng.htm

PAHO Signs On To '3 by 5'

PAHO will work with all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to reach the goal of universal access to antiretroviral drugs, with a particular focus on providing technical cooperation to the countries most in need, including those in Central America and the Caribbean. It is estimated that currently 53% of people in need of treatment have access to antiretrovirals. The plan is part of WHO's "3 by 5 Initiative," which seeks to obtain antiretroviral treatment for 3 million people with HIV in the developing world by the end of 2005. A Task Force convened by PAHO in January 2004 developed five strategic orientations that will guide the organization's work in the next years. More: <http://www.paho.org/English/AD/FCH/AI/3x5so.htm>

Caribbean countries prepare to expand access to ART

Caribbean national programs involved in ART delivery recommended that CAREC and CDC develop subregional care and treatment guidelines and asked PANCAP/CARICOM to identify regional laboratories to support ART. Other suggestions included the development, by CARICOM, of model legislation to address stigma and discrimination, as well as TRIPS and regional drug registration. These recommendations were made at a meeting last February in Trinidad and Tobago, organized by PAHO, CAREC, CDC and CARICOM to review current practices, issues and options in expanding access to ART and HIV medicines. Participants concluded that although ARV price reductions have been made available through various channels, many countries were not utilizing these opportunities yet, due to administrative and contractual barriers. The need to harmonize quality criteria in the source selection of ARV was also highlighted. A power point presentation with the recommendations is available through sida@paho.org.

The Bahamas success to be documented

In less than a year the number of people under treatment in The Bahamas has increased from 345 to 1,200. The rapid increase was a result of a government commitment announced in September 2002 to expand ART, with the support of CARICOM, PAHO, the US Department of Health and Human Services and the Clinton Foundation. Other success story was the reduction of MTCT from 28% to 3% (2002). PAHO and the Ministry of Health of The Bahamas will soon disseminate a paper analyzing the conditions that have facilitated the successful implementation of this process, as well as providing an outline of the methodology that has been applied. To be informed when the paper is available, send a message to sida@paho.org.

PAHO Offers Support in Procurement Planning to Global Fund Recipients

Principal Recipients of the Global Fund are expected to purchase pharmaceutical products of quality, in correct quantities, procured on a timely basis, and at the lowest possible cost. Principal Recipients, who wish to use the procurement services of PAHO for the purchase of ARV and other pharmaceuticals will find information on important issues such as selection of pharmaceutical products, estimation of needs, selection of suppliers, price solicitation and procurement, shipment and technical support in a new document called "PAHO Policy in the Procurement of Pharmaceutical Products for Projects Financed by the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It is

available at: http://www.paho.org/English/AD/DPC/PAHO_GFATM_Policyeng.pdf

Study compares Brazil and Mexico ART scale up

Mexico and Brazil are Latin America's most populous countries and have more than 60% of the registered cases of AIDS in region. The two countries, however, have different strategies to scale up antiretroviral treatment. A study now offers a comparison of the cost, sources of funding, coverage and impact of treatment between the two countries. "Funding and access to HIV/AIDS treatment: the case of Brazil and Mexico" comes as a chapter of the new publication "Pharmaceutical Policies in Latin America", partly funded by PAHO. Copies (in Spanish) can be requested from sida@paho.org

Materials promote discussion on stigma in the health sector

A new PAHO report revealed considerable stigma and discrimination among health workers of many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to "Understanding and Responding to HIV/AIDS-Related Stigma and Discrimination in The Health Sector," discrimination is driven by fear, as well as ignorance and prejudice against homosexuals, sex workers and drug users. The report contains a review of several knowledge, attitude and practice studies developed in the region and suggests strategies and interventions to address the problem. PAHO has also produced a series of materials (posters, public service announcements, press releases, power point presentations) that can be used to raise awareness of this problem among health sector workers and clients. <http://www.paho.org/english/ad/fch/ai/stigma-l.htm>

Elimination of congenital syphilis in: a task within reach

Congenital syphilis can be prevented with a single-dose treatment of penicillin. In addition, the scaling up of PMTCT programs provides a chance to maximize resources for reducing congenital syphilis morbidity and mortality. Yet, it is estimated that every year over 100,000 children are born with congenital syphilis in Latin America and the Caribbean. In order to strengthen the regional capacity to combat this problem, PAHO has led the creation of an inter-programmatic group with the goal of enhancing the response to congenital syphilis prevention at the regional level. PAHO is also collecting epidemiological data to develop a regional baseline and is conducting a study in three countries to determine the underreporting rate of maternal syphilis.

More: <http://www.paho.org/common/Display.asp?Lang=E&RecID=6434>

New studies on Southern Cone drug users available

Non-injecting drug users, a group little noticed in the epidemic, are more vulnerable to HIV and in need of target programs aimed at reducing unprotected sexual intercourse and the combined use of alcohol, injecting and non-injecting drugs. The recommendation comes from the Uruguayan study "Cocaine users: risk practices, and prevalence of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B and C", which was funded by PAHO. In Argentina, another study, "Prevention in injecting drug users and their partners", also sponsored by PAHO, discovered an HIV prevalence of 54% among Buenos Aires IDU, and only a 33% consistent condom use. Copies can be requested from sida@paho.org

10 countries examine best adolescent programs

The State of the Art in Development of Sexual and Reproductive Health Programs for Adolescents and Youth workshop took place in Panama City in October, 2003, prior to the third CONCASIDA Congress. The workshop included the participation of representatives from National Adolescent Health Programs in 10 Latin American and

Caribbean countries, as well as international experts in the subject of sexual and reproductive health program development for adolescents and youth. The meeting was sponsored by PAHO, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

More: <http://www.paho.org/English/AD/FCH/CA/PanamaMeet03.htm>.

350 health journalists join RED SALUD

RED SALUD, the internet-based network of Latin American health journalists launched last year, has now 350 members from 29 countries. The network creates a sustained dialogue aimed at improving health reporting through informal peer exchanges as well as professionally moderated discussions about specific challenges in health reporting (covering HIV/AIDS, reporting on sexuality etc.) RED SALUD is a joint initiative between PAHO, Communication Initiative and Iberian-American Foundation for a New Journalism (created by Gabriel Garcia Marques). Health journalists are encouraged to join through the website <http://www.comminit.com/la/redsaud/>

Regional calendar has four new participants

Respuesta Regional, the regional calendar of HIV/AIDS events was joined by Agua Buena, ICWLAC, PANCAP and PASCA. Previous participating institutions were UNFPA, UNICEF, UNAIDS, SIDALAC, RED-LA and PAHO/WHO. Thanks to the increased participation, the calendar is more active than ever, with a record of 17 events in March. For more information about these organizations and to see the HIV/AIDS events they are organizing in Latin America and the Caribbean, go to <http://www.calsplus.com/sida>

Most frequently-used HIV/AIDS acronyms

http://www.paho.org/English/AD/FCH/AI/Acronym_hivAIDS.pdf

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.