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New fact sheets on care and treatment reflect differences in cost, care, coverage

In October, PAHO issued the first of a series of fact sheets with information about care and treatment of people living with HIV in the Americas, reflecting wide differences in prices, coverage and health costs. The fact sheets include data on ARV coverage and prices, lines of treatment, laboratory diagnostic supplies, human resource capacity, and voluntary counseling and testing, among other things. Belize, Canada, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Paraguay were the first countries to release their fact sheets, with more countries to be included in the coming weeks. The Americas is the first continent to produce such a comprehensive set of data on care and treatment, as the information is difficult to obtain, and often require the coordination of data from different sources. The fact sheets allow PAHO/WHO to monitor progress on its part of the "3 by 5" Initiative, which includes getting lifelong ARV treatment to 600 000 people in the Americas. They will also enable governments, NGOs, and the international community to monitor and support the complex tasks involved in providing care to people living with HIV. More:

http://www.paho.org/English/AD/FCH/AI/HIV_Fact_Sheets.htm

Central America shows commitment to scaling up HIV care

A subregional meeting in Costa Rica in August on comprehensive care and access to ARV showed that the Central American countries have made considerable progress in increasing the number of patients under treatment. In Honduras, patients receiving ART

increased from 183 in 2002 to 2,312 in 2004; in Panama from 1,147 in 2002 to 1,873 in 2004; and in Guatemala from 1,222 in 2003 to 2,227 in 2004. A substantial part of the meeting was devoted to assessing the progress of the countries in ARV treatment and comprehensive care, including human resource capacity building, supply management, and overall program management. The following data is part of the assessment of all seven Central American countries.

- 28% have a fully developed drug policy.
- 43% have a fully developed coordination mechanism for purchase of drugs and other supplies.
- 72% have professionals familiar with drug regulatory frameworks and quality criteria.
- 43% have clear guidelines for distribution of drugs and supplies.
- 43% have a mechanism to monitor adherence.
- 28% have mechanisms to control the clinical response, adverse reactions and drug interactions.
- 72% have guidelines and educational material for health workers involved in ART.

For the final report, send a request to sida@paho.org

OAS links HIV/AIDS more closely with human rights issues

As part of the efforts to link HIV/AIDS more closely with human rights issues, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS held a hearing, inviting PAHO and UNAIDS to give a presentation. The Commission is considering the adoption of a resolution that can serve as a regional standard for human rights and HIV/AIDS. PAHO and UNAIDS suggested that the resolution mention the right of people with HIV to enjoy the highest possible level of physical and mental health. The Commission decided that from now on it will include the issue of the human rights of people with HIV in their reports on prisons, freedom of expression, women, migrant workers, and indigenous peoples. Furthermore, in upcoming visits to the countries, the Commission plans to include scrutiny of the human rights situation of people with HIV in penitentiaries, asylums, psychiatric hospitals, and orphanages. More:

<http://www.paho.org/Spanish/DD/PIN/ps041027a.htm> (Spanish only)

In spite of challenges, LAC leads developing world in ART

The latest issue of PAHO's magazine, *Perspectives in Health*, examines how Latin America and the Caribbean have become the leading developing region in the provision of ART. It describes the many challenges faced by the region to increase access to these drugs, in spite of having more robust health systems than some of the other developing regions. At the end of 2003 there were 210,000 HIV patients on ART throughout LAC. That represents 55% of those believed to be in need. In Africa only 100,000 of an estimated 4.4 million people are receiving these drugs. Public health advocates acknowledge that there remain frustrating delays in getting treatment to those who need it, but they say the achievements so far reflect a growing commitment to providing universal ART access. The article also highlights the Declaration of Nuevo Leon, a call by heads of state at the recent Summit of the Americas to provide universal ARV access in the Americas, or to treat at least 600,000 people living with HIV by 2005. More: http://www.paho.org/english/dd/pin/Number19_article03.htm

AIDS has claimed more than 700,000 lives in the region

As of December 2003, 1,388,810 AIDS cases were reported in the Americas – an

increase of nearly 15% of the 1,184,651 reported in December 2000. The latest edition of *AIDS Surveillance in the Americas*, issued jointly on an annual basis by PAHO and UNAIDS, shows that most of the AIDS cases in the Americas are among those above 15 years of age – 1,251,924 as of December of 2003. There were 25,423 AIDS cases among children under 15. Since 1986, 716,499 AIDS-related deaths have been reported in the Hemisphere. More: <http://www.paho.org/common/Display.asp?Lang=S&RecID=7819>

3 by 5 officers attend scaling up workshop

A Global Scale-up Workshop was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, 24-29 October, to orient 19 new “3 by 5 project officers” and many other national professional WHO staff to the “3 by 5” Initiative, including new tools which can be used in their work. Part of the induction were several discussions as to what officers could expect when they first arrived in their countries, guided by seven WHO Representatives and Liaison Officers, including Dr. Kathleen Israel from Belize. Only one PAHO 3 by 5 officer has been appointed to date, Dr. Amalia Del Riego, formerly Health Systems Advisor in the PAHO’s office in the Bahamas. Dr. Del Riego will coordinate PAHO’s 3 by 5 activities at the regional level. A second officer is expected to be posted to Haiti in January, 2005. WHO provided useful briefing materials which can be adapted and used for further training in the Americas.

PAHO establishes first Technical Advisory Committee in HIV/AIDS

On January 21, 2005, PAHO’s first Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in HIV/AIDS will meet in the Dominican Republic. This Committee will advise the HIV/AIDS program on scientific and technical aspects of its work. It consists of ten members appointed for one year. The Committee will be Co-chaired by Dr. Paul Farmer, Professor of Department of Social Medicine at the Harvard Medical School and founding director of Partners in Health, and Dr. Mercedes Weissenbacher, Scientific Director, National AIDS Reference Center, University of Buenos Aires. On January 22-24 the TAC will meet with national HIV/AIDS coordinators and PAHO HIV/AIDS staff from all countries of the region to discuss and share best practices and challenges in scaling up comprehensive care and treatment, including prevention. Specific areas for where countries, development partners and PAHO can provide technical cooperation will be discussed, and countries will be asked to develop plans for implementing this assistance.

Directing Council session focused on treatment

The last session of PAHO’s Directing Council included an extended and lively debate about the need to accelerate ART. Although HIV/AIDS has often been an item of the agenda, the 45th Directing Council was the first to use this opportunity to focus on care and treatment for people with HIV. This governing body of PAHO is made up of all the health ministers of the Americas who meet annually to set health policies and receive new reports on the state of health in the Hemisphere. The Council’s resolution urged member states to scale up efforts to treat HIV/AIDS/STI within the context of a comprehensive response to the epidemic and to strengthen health systems for the effective response to the challenges of the epidemic. In addition, the ministers of health asked PAHO to continue to develop mechanisms to scale up treatment, including the expansion of the Regional Revolving Fund for Strategic Health Supplies. More: <http://www.paho.org/english/gov/cd/CD45-11-e.pdf>

Manual makes recommendations to improve prevention with IDU

The national response in LAC to the prevention of HIV infection among those who use drugs through injections “have been insufficient” says a new manual, *Blood or Sexually Transmitted Infections Among Injecting Drug Users and their partners in the Americas*. The publication, available only in Spanish, is aimed at health professionals, planners, community organizers, primary care and drug-dependency treatment center professionals and makes recommendations to improve prevention of blood or sexually transmitted infections among IDU using a public health approach. Published by PAHO, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and the Ministry of Health of Spain, the document emphasizes the need for a comprehensive coverage, in order to facilitate IDU access to services and prevention materials. More: <http://www.paho.org/common/Display.asp?Lang=S&RecID=6483>

Journalists get new CD-ROM on HIV

Voice of America, in partnership with PAHO, launched an interactive CD-ROM on HIV in October 2004. The first of a larger series focusing on health journalism, this CD-ROM is a tool for reporters and journalism students to improve their reporting on the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS, as well as on other issues critical to the health and well-being of global audiences. It generates a virtual newsroom and provides the user with step-by-step instructions, guidance and exercises on writing effective health-related news and feature stories on HIV. Other partners in the project include USAID, UNAIDS, and pharmaceutical company Merck. The initiative will help promote public health by educating journalists on the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of HIV and other infectious diseases. More: <http://www.ibb.gov/healthcd/healthcd.htm>

UNESCO joins regional HIV/AIDS calendar

Respuesta Regional, the regional calendar of HIV/AIDS events has now 12 members, with UNESCO joining in September. Other members are AGUA BUENA, ICWLAC UNFPA, GCTH, UNAIDS, PAHO, PANCAP, PASCA, REDLA+, SIDALAC, UNESCO and UNICEF. To see this month's events, go to <http://www.calsplus.com/sida>

Coming soon: PAHO to form Human Red Ribbon and to listen to Bolivian leader

PAHO HQ will mark World AIDS Day in Washington with a series of activities to rekindle the commitment of its staff and demonstrate that commitment to the local community. The kick off event will be the formation a Human AIDS Ribbon on Virginia Avenue, made up of staff from PAHO and other institutions. This will be followed by a ceremony in which Gracia Violeta Ross Quiroga, Bolivian representative of the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, will share her experiences in the fight for equality and women's rights with respect to HIV/AIDS.

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.