

IN DEVELOPMENT

A REPORT TO ASHM MEMBERS: INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

June 2006

WELCOME!

This is the first quarterly electronic newsletter from the ASHM International Division. This newsletter will provide members with a profile of current activities in the International Work Plan, along with news of the international work of ASHM members. Many ASHM members are active in regional and international projects and over 40% of members now indicate an interest in international HIV activities. In each issue of this newsletter we hope to highlight some of the international work in which ASHM members are involved. Consequently, we are keen to hear from those members who are working in HIV-related projects in resource-limited settings. As part of ASHM's expanding International Program we are setting up a database with details of our members who have worked or are working in international HIV treatment and care programs. If you would like to be registered on this database please contact Julie Moyer at julie.moyer@ashm.org.au.

ASHM MEMBERS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Oil Search

In December 2005, ASHM was contracted by Oil Search Pty Ltd, a major resource development corporation in Papua New Guinea, to run a four-day course in HIV medicine for its medical and health care staff in the Southern Highlands. Drs Peter Pigott, Darren Russell and Goa Tau (from Port Moresby General Hospital where he heads up the Heduru clinic, PNG's primary HIV facility) were the presenters on this course, along with Levinia Crooks, ASHM CEO. Eighteen participants were trained. ASHM is conducting a second course for Oil Search later this year.

Collaboration for Health in PNG

The Collaboration for Health in PNG (CHPNG) is a philanthropic initiative of a number of Australian pharmaceutical companies, in partnership with ASHM, NAPWA, Caritas Australia and independent advisor Elizabeth Reid, which supports the Strengthening Capacity of HIV Health Care Teams (SCHHCT) program in the faith-based health system in PNG. This program aims to improve capacity for care, support day care centres, and increase access to HIV treatment. Reports from this project will soon be posted on the International Program page of the ASHM website. A number of ASHM members are involved in the SCHHCT workshops and follow-up clinical mentoring. These include: Drs Peter Pigott, Claudia White and Arun Menon along with Angela Kelly, Carol Martin, Tim Leach, Steve Lambert and Suzanne Lau Gooley.

Timor Leste

Given recent political events in Timor Leste, ASHM's thoughts are with those individuals and organisations personally and professionally affected. Many of the plans laid down in the recently adopted National Strategy for HIV will have to be adapted to a new situation marked by internal disruption and large numbers of displaced persons.

ASHM will continue to provide support to an HIV interest group which has formed within the East Timor Medical Association. Doctors from this group are still keen to continue their work, and we plan to sponsor participants to this year's ASHM conference and short courses.

Many ASHM members have ongoing relationships with Timor Leste. Earlier this year, Dr Brian Hughes worked with the HIV interest group to produce basic HIV management guidelines. Other ASHM members who have worked in Timor include Drs Margaret Gibbons and Linda Dayan. ASHM also recently conducted study tours for NGO representatives

Vietnam

A number of ASHM members are currently working in HIV treatment and care programs in Vietnam. Dr Rachel Burdon is a senior technical advisor for Family Health International, Vietnam.

Nick Medland, a high HIV caseload GP from Melbourne and an ASHM Board member, and Dr Peter Pigott, physician and formerly the Director of The HIV Medical Clinic at Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney, were recently in Vietnam providing technical advice and support and mentoring for Family Health International and on a clinical mentoring program through International Centre for Equitable Health Care Access and Family Health International, supported by USAID.

Nick spent two months at a new community-level clinical service providing VCT and health care for PLWHA in Thu Duc District of Ho Chi Minh City. Peter worked at this same site and also visited Tan Chau, on the Mekong River at the border between Vietnam and Cambodia. The mentoring program involved providing daily on-site training for doctors and other staff, and technical assistance in clinical pathways and structures. Peter's brief also included linking TB and HIV services in an environment where TB is the most common opportunistic infection in PLWHAs. The scale-up of HIV services and infrastructure, including antiretroviral therapy in Vietnam, is in its early stages and is hampered by a shortage of experienced health care workers. To aid in this effort, ASHM will sponsor participants from Vietnam to attend this year's ASHM conference and training program.

We are exploring additional ways in which ASHM could support the HIV response in Vietnam and are interested in hearing from other members who have worked in Vietnam.

Indonesia

ASHM is working with the Indonesian Medical Association, The Association of Physicians on AIDS Care and the AusAID Indonesia HIV Prevention and Care Project to support the expansion of HIV treatment and care and the development of a national network supporting HIV health care professionals. A number of members, amongst them Drs Sean Riminton, Margot Whitfield, Patrick Daniels, Patricia Price and Martyn French, have participated in meetings and clinical forums and established relationships with Indonesian colleagues. The recent earthquake in Central Java has had a significant impact on the health care system and our thoughts are with our Indonesian colleagues.

India

In 2002 the Australia India Council (AIC) provided funding to Suzanne Crowe, currently the Deputy Chair of the AIC, to initiate programs to train doctors in India in HIV clinical management, with a strong focus on understanding antiretroviral drugs and monitoring HIV infection. These programs have been conducted with a number of our Indian colleagues (including Dr Chinkholal Thangsing, Dr Kumarasamy and Dr Raj Uzgare), who have helped prepare the content of the programs and lectures. To date, Suzanne has organised, in collaboration with the AIC and the Confederation of Indian Industry, over 25 programs in cities and rural areas throughout India, in which over 900 doctors have received training. In 2006 Drs Kate Cherry, Michelle Giles, Adam Jenney, Anne Mijch, Alex Padiglione, Steve Wesselingh and Ian Wooley have conducted the programs in Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Calcutta, Chandigarh, Chennai, Goa, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Jamshedpur, Mumbai, Nagpur, Srinagar and Surat. Since 2005, allied health staff, including nurses, laboratory technicians and pharmacists, led by Christine Bowtell-Harris, Lisa Morris and Alison Duncan, have also received training. Scientists from the Burnet Institute have worked with scientists

and technicians (Dr Balakrishnan's laboratory at YRG Care in Chennai, and Ranbaxy laboratories in Mumbai) to transfer technology for low-cost CD4 and viral load tests in order to monitor HIV infection.

Pacific

Gary Rogers has taken up a position at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, based in Noumea, as an HIV and STI Adviser. He coordinates the provision of technical support and has been appointed as deputy head of the organisation's HIV & STI Section. He is assisting Pacific Island countries and territories to develop programs for clinical management of people living with HIV, as well as prevention, surveillance, counselling and community support programs.

INTERNATIONAL DIVISION

HIV Matters

In March this year ASHM launched the first edition of its new international journal series *HIV Matters: Discussions on the Global Pandemic*. The journal is supported by a network of organisations working in HIV internationally, and is being sent to all ASHM members who have indicated an interest in international activities. If you have not received a copy, or if you would like to contribute to the series in the future, please contact Marina Carman at marina.carman@ashm.org.au.

New website

ASHM has recently launched its new website, with updated international pages. Please visit the website and browse through the updated product, available at www.ashm.org.au. We look forward to your comments, expressions of interests or inquiries.

CONFERENCE UPDATE

Preparations for the international courses and program at this year's ASHM conference are under way. The conference will be held in Melbourne from 11 to 14 October. Details of courses and the sponsorship program are contained in the conference registration brochure and on the website. We encourage members to submit abstracts for the International Program.

We have a number of invited speakers this year with significant international experience who will participate in our symposia and forums. Peter Drahos, Waffa El Sadr, Joep Lange, Christopher Lee, Vera Paiva, and Daniel Tarantola will all add to the depth of discussions on treatment scale-up, international HIV policy and the prevention/treatment nexus in resource-limited settings. Please refer to the website (www.ashm.org.au/conference) for more information about these speakers.

More information: If you would like more information about the projects profiled in this newsletter, training courses, clinical mentoring, or short-term placements, please contact the International Team at international@ashm.org.au

