

# IN DEVELOPMENT

## A REPORT TO ASHM MEMBERS: INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

September 2006

### WELCOME!

This is the second quarterly electronic newsletter from the ASHM International Division. This newsletter provides members with a profile of current activities in the International Work Plan, along with news of the international work of ASHM members. In each issue of this newsletter we shall 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 have set up a database of our members who have worked or are working in international HIV treatment and care programs. Thank you to those who registered after the first newsletter was released in June. If you have not done so already, but would like to be registered on this database please contact Julie Moyer at [julie.moyer@ashm.org.au](mailto:julie.moyer@ashm.org.au).

### ASHM MEMBERS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

#### Cambodia

A number of ASHM members have been actively involved in Cambodia's national HIV response.

In May 2003, **Chris Bourne** developed and facilitated a four-day training program for doctors who care for men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender people, for Family Health International/USAID-Cambodia. The training program was based on 'Clinical management guidelines for sexual health care of transgender people and MSM in Asia' and included: gender, sex and sexuality; theory and practice of sexual history taking and sexual health examinations including proctoscopy; management of STIs (especially syndromic) and service reorientation. MSM community members contributed to the training by telling their life stories, experiences with health care, describing their needs for sexual health care and volunteering for the practice history and examination.

**Barry Edwards** has been working as the Program Advisor for a local NGO – Cambodian HIV/AIDS Education and Care (CHEC), since July 2005. CHEC is based in Phnom Penh, but works in five rural districts to provide village volunteers and health centres with skills in community education, counselling and home-based care. CHEC also provides training for other organisations, and produces HIV/AIDS programs on TV and radio.

A collaboration between the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, University of New South Wales (NCHECR) and the Cambodian Ministry of Health began in the late 1990s. NCHECR's Cambodia activities are under the direction of **Professor David Cooper** and Professor **John Kaldor**, who has responsibility for the current program.

The Cambodia Treatment Access Program (CTAP), commenced in 2003. **Julian Elliott** and **Sarah Huffam** were seconded by NCHECR to the Cambodian National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs (NCHADS) of the Ministry of Health in Phnom Penh, where Sarah is still currently based. They have provided technical assistance to NCHADS to support the development of the national HIV treatment and

care policy, development of treatment guidelines, establishment of the national HIV care training program, HIV treatment data systems, and procurement and supply management.

As part of the collaboration with NCHECR Sarah and Julian assisted NCHADS to establish the Social Health Clinic (SHC), an ambulatory HIV research and training clinic. This has been the base for a research program funded by AusAID to investigate optimal use of antiretroviral therapy in Cambodia, focusing on adherence and immune restoration disease. Collaborative research at the SHC includes participation in the TREAT Asia HIV Observational Database (TAHOD), a project of the TREAT Asia network, the 'Paediatric Randomization of Early versus Deferred ART in Cambodia and Thailand (PREDICT)' study, in collaboration with the HIV Netherlands Australia Thailand Research Collaboration, and participation in 'A Study of the Prevalence of HIV-related Neurological Disease in the Asia Pacific Region', conducted by the Asia Pacific Neuro AIDS Consortium.

**Robert Oelrichs** was on secondment from NCHECR and the Burnet Institute to the Cambodian National Laboratory for Public Health (NLPH) in Phnom Penh for two years, where **Claire Ryan** an Australian Youth Ambassador for development (AusAID) (on leave from her PhD study at the Burnet Institute/Monash University) is currently working. Support at NLPH by Robert, Claire and **Philip Cunningham** (NCHECR) includes assistance with the development of quality management systems, establishing CD4 cell count and HIV viral load quantification.\*

**\*Acknowledgements:** NCHECR staff: Mary Poynten, Iona Millwood, Lisa Maher, Kathy Petoumenos, Julian Zhou, Matthew Law, Patricia Xu, Annie Tung. The Government of Cambodia Ministry of Health National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STIs, Dr Mean Chhi Vun (Director), Dr Saphonn Vonthanak (Chief of Research Unit), the National Institute for Public Health, Dr Ung Sam An (Director). The SHC is funded by Roche (through CTAP), ART is procured by the NCHADS via the GFATM, research project funding is received from AusAID, US NIH, American Foundation for AIDS Research, and the funding for Asia Pacific Neuro AIDS Consortium is from US NIH.

### **University of Queensland**

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A workshop on **HIV and Overseas Work** was staged in Brisbane on Saturday 26 August 2006. It had its genesis in the desire to provide appropriate education for those planning to work in countries where HIV is a development issue. As it was the first of these workshops to be staged, it was a 'test of process', and participants were asked to evaluate all aspects of the workshop. Twenty-eight (28) participants attended (23 from Queensland, 3 from the ACT, 1 from NSW and 1 from Victoria). Three participants were medical doctors, 11 were nurses, and the remainder were project managers, project officers and education personnel.

The evaluation shows the workshop 'hit the mark' and filled an emerging gap in HIV education. In the evaluation, participants were asked to indicate whether it was worthwhile attending the workshop and all stated it was 'worthwhile' or 'very worthwhile'. Participants were asked if they would recommend this workshop to colleagues and all respondents (100%) stated they would recommend this workshop.

The design of the workshop was formulated by a steering committee of a number of collaborating organisations. These organisations also supplied presenters and facilitators for the day, and as a result of this wealth of experience and expertise, the participants were able to draw on much knowledge and skill across the day. The collaborating organisations are:

- Australian Council for International Development
- Australasian Society for HIV Medicine
- Burnet Institute
- Griffith University
- JTA International
- Marie Stopes International Australia
- Médecins Sans Frontières
- National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS
- National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research
- Oxfam Australia

Red Cross Australia  
The University of Queensland, HIV & HCV Education Projects  
World Vision Australia

The workshop on 'HIV and Overseas Work' is to be staged twice a year – in February and in August. The next workshop will be in Melbourne on Saturday 10 February 2007 and the subsequent one will be in Sydney in August 2007. Numbers are limited. More information, including flyers and application forms, are available from any of the collaborating organisations, from the ASHM website ([www.ashm.org.au](http://www.ashm.org.au)) or from the University of Queensland School of Medicine website ([www.som.uq.edu.au/hivandhcvprojects](http://www.som.uq.edu.au/hivandhcvprojects))

## 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 was sent to all ASHM members who have indicated an interest in international activities. The next edition is due to be released before the New Year. If you would like to receive *HIV Matters*, or if you would like to contribute to the series in the future, please contact Marina Carman at [marina.carman@ashm.org.au](mailto:marina.carman@ashm.org.au).

### **New website**

The new ASHM website went live on 31 March 2006, with updated international pages. Please visit the website and browse – [www.ashm.org.au](http://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 being finalised. The conference will be held in Melbourne from 11 to 14 October. We look forward to seeing you there. ASHM is very happy to welcome 85 international guests from south-east Asia who are attending the conference.

We have a number of invited speakers with significant international experience who will participate in our symposia and forums. Dennis Altman, Peter Drahos, Waffa El-Sadr, Joep Lange, Christopher Lee, 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](http://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](mailto:international@ashm.org.au)

