

IN DEVELOPMENT

A REPORT TO MEMBERS: INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

April 2007

WELCOME!

Welcome to the April 2007 edition of the 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. If you would like to be registered on this database, and have not done so already, please contact the ASHM International Division (email: international@ashm.org.au).

This edition of *In Development* will focus on Papua New Guinea. Reports have been included from Angela Kelly and Heather Worth from the National Centre in HIV Social Research (UNSW), Dr Alan C Hauquitz from the Anton Breinl Centre for Public Health & Tropical Medicine, James Cook University and Carol Martin from Royal North Shore Hospital.

ASHM MEMBERS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Divine Word University – James Cook University Partnership: Expanding Research Capacity in Papua New Guinea

Dr Alan C Hauquitz, Anton Breinl Centre for Public Health & Tropical Medicine, James Cook University

In February 2005, Divine Word University (DWU) and James Cook University (JCU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to encourage the design and conduct of joint research projects and other collaborative activities. The goal was to strengthen the research capacity of students and staff at DWU using a learning-by-doing approach to research training. The intent was to develop joint projects across the range of disciplines at DWU. Initially the focus was on the Faculty of Health. A number of joint activities were carried out during 2005 and 2006 with more being planned for 2007 and beyond.

The first set of joint projects targeted HIV in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Two proposals were submitted to and funded by the PNG National AIDS Council. The projects were conducted in 2005 and 2006. One was an evaluation of the Madang based Bethany Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centre. The other was a pilot project at Modilon General Hospital (MGH) to determine the cost of caring for HIV-positive inpatients. Both projects involved students and staff from DWU (including the Lutheran School of Nursing, which is affiliated with DWU). In addition, staff from Bethany and MGH worked closely with the research teams and gave their time generously. Some of the main findings from the projects were presented by the DWU-based researchers (a first for each) at the September 2006 PNG Medical Symposium that was held at DWU. Spin offs from the projects included: the development of closer working relationships between DWU staff and other organisations working in HIV; basic HIV education sessions for MGH staff; stimulation of interest in research activities at DWU and MGH; and increased involvement of DWU staff and students in HIV prevention activities.

Non-HIV collaborative activities were also undertaken. A three-way collaboration between the PNG Institute of Medical Research (IMR), DWU, and JCU saw DWU health management students trained in interview techniques. Those students then undertook a household survey for IMR in a village north of

Madang. Another project saw several JCU medical laboratory sciences students work with MGH laboratory staff to improve testing procedures for an infection control program. Also, two epidemiologists from JCU conducted an Introduction to SPSS (statistical package for social science) Workshop for interested staff from DWU and MGH. Generally, all parties were satisfied with the outcomes.

Additional joint projects are being undertaken in 2007. The partnership will expand beyond the Health Faculties at both institutions. Several DWU staff will visit the JCU campus to promote the partnership to other JCU faculties and research centres, among other things. An epidemiologist from DWU will contribute to a JCU epidemiology block subject conducted for Masters of Public Health (MPH) students. A JCU MPH block subject in tropical paediatrics may be hosted at the DWU campus and involve staff from MGH. Clinical sessions may be held at MGH. Staff at both universities are discussing ways in which the partnership can be expanded to benefit all participants.

Strengthening HIV Social Research in PNG

Dr Angela Kelly and Dr Heather Worth, National Centre in HIV Social Research (NCHSR) (UNSW)

Strengthening HIV Social Research Capacity in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is an AusAID HIV/AIDS Partnership Initiative (AHAPI) grant, which supports collaboration between NCHSR and the PNG Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR). The project is designed to position social research as a central component of the evidentiary base to find effective, sustainable responses to the HIV epidemic in PNG.

Good public health and a sound public policy about HIV and AIDS demand the collection, analysis and effective dissemination of valid empirical evidence. The best HIV social research is conducted by researchers rigorously trained in research methods and sensitive to the politics and ethics of such research. Research findings must be grounded in indigenous meanings and gathered with community members. HIV social research is about understanding as well as counting, and about providing evidence for sustainable HIV interventions.

This program is training a cadre of ten research Cadets. The Cadets were selected from scores who applied from all over PNG, with the final ten representing seven different provinces. Each Cadet has an undergraduate degree. This program has been designed to simultaneously develop the Cadet's conceptual knowledge with experiences in the field. The program provides theoretical and practical experience in both qualitative and quantitative research methods with a variety of field work experiences. The Cadets have become skilled in in-depth interviewing, conducting focus groups, participant observation, surveys and SPSS (statistical package for social science). The Cadets have learnt how to write research proposals and have recently submitted one to the National AIDS Council Secretariat (NACS) concerning the social impact of treatment for PLWHA in PNG. Currently the Cadets are involved in undertaking the evaluation for the PNG Catholic Health Service which is hosting the International HIV Training program for Holy Spirit Sisters being held in Goroka over eight weeks. Dr. Angela Kelly from the National Centre in HIV Social Research (at UNSW) is the Team Leader of this program.

It has been long recognised that for an effective response to the epidemic, responses must be grounded in the lives of the people infected and affected. This requires the inclusion of indigenous ways of knowing and of reading their country. With these realisations, the program has set about to train Papua New Guineans in developing their own knowledge and skills alongside those of rigorous social science in order to respond more effectively to their epidemic.

The Strengthening the Capacity of HIV Health Care Teams (SCHHCT) Facilitators Training Workshop on Caring for People with HIV in PNG

Carol Martin, Royal North Shore Hospital, NSW

On 28 January 2007 a two week workshop for the training of church based SCHHCT facilitators on caring for people with HIV was held at the Salvation Army Centre in Lae. The workshop was organised by the Collaboration for Health in Papua New Guinea (CHPNG) in cooperation with both Australian and PNG members of the AusAID-funded Churches Partnership Programme (CPP) and with support from ASHM. The workshop was facilitated by Tim Leach, Carol Martin, Maura Elaripe, Elizabeth Reid and Rosemary Bundo. Larissa Sandy attended to assist with the recording of the training materials. The Minister for Health, Sir Peter Barter, sat in on some sessions of the workshop and met with the participants, HIV Coordinators from participating churches and a representative of Igat Hope.

The workshop was structured so that during the first week, from 28 January to 2 February, the 27 participants from the seven Churches experienced the Workshop as participants. The second week contained two streams: strengthening the participants' capacities as facilitators; and developing their knowledge of and familiarity with the approach and materials of the SCHHCT Workshop.

The workshop aimed to continue the work already started within the HIV Coordinators' group to foster and encourage inter-church cooperation in their response to HIV. It succeeded in this, both by strengthening trust and mutual understanding through mixed small group work, and by encouraging future collaboration in the training of health care workers.

It is anticipated that there will be further training for facilitators from interested churches in late 2007. As a further skill-building exercise, facilitators trained in the first facilitator workshop will be included as resource persons. Churches not included in the CPP, for example the Evangelical Church of PNG, have expressed interest in participating.

This workshop proved to be a success. The philosophy of capacity building within teams was evident and the participants were eager and keen to extend and expand on these new skills and techniques that were being learnt. The expression of collaboration amongst the participants and the different church groups was also encouraging.

For the facilitators the work was hard, but as always, very rewarding.

Acknowledgments: Many thanks to my fellow facilitators and all the participants for sharing their time and experience with me during this workshop. This article is taken from the main report and feedback from the Lae workshop by Elizabeth Reid.

INTERNATIONAL DIVISION

PNG-Australia Sexual Health Improvement Program (PASHIP)

ASHM is a member of the consortium of Australian and PNG partners, headed by Caritas Australia that is working on the AusAID funded PNG-Australia Sexual Health Improvement Program. This program aims at improving treatment, counselling, care and support for STI management in the Southern Highlands and Chimbu provinces of PNG. The PNG partners include the National Catholic Health Service (NCHS), National Catholic AIDS Office (NCAO) and the National Catholic Family Life Apostolate (NCFLA). The NCHS has a well established health system and networks throughout PNG and is integrated with government health systems. Working with our local partners such as the NCHS provides a crucial link to communities. It offers an established partnership with provincial and district level government health services, which facilitates the sharing of lessons learnt and provides an existing framework for shared capacity development. In addition, other consortia members include Catholic Health Australia (CHA), which has considerable sexual health and technical expertise through their extensive networks, including St. Vincent's Hospital Sydney. The consortia will work together in consultation and collaboration with the PNG Department of Health and the National and Provincial AIDS Councils.

The program is comprehensive and broad ranging in addressing sexual health in PNG. It recognises that the contributing factors to poor sexual health are complex and interconnected, and have their basis in key issues of gender, poverty, changing cultural norms and inadequate service provision. The medical component of the program aims to strengthen and build the capacity of the health centres not only in the clinical and laboratory detection and treatment of STIs, but in improved sexual health and increased community awareness and involvement in health issues, particularly STIs and HIV. Existing networks will be utilised and strengthened, and new partnerships between stakeholders developed to more effectively provide STI prevention, treatment and management services.

In addition, strategies will be based on social research designed to: 1) understand community attitudes towards STIs and HIV; 2) identify effective strategies to promote positive sexual health; 3) identify the underlying cultural factors that contribute to STIs and HIV. Building upon the research findings, a strategy of community engagement and development will be undertaken to enable communities to consider their own individual issues and their effect on their sexual health. The program has a strong

youth focus, with peer education projects designed to provide clear, consistent information about sexual health to facilitate open discussion amongst young people.

For more information regarding this program, please contact Jason Lee at ASHM (email: jason.lee@ashm.org.au).

The Australian Leadership Awards - Fellowships 2007

ASHM Regional HIV Training Program, Supported by the Australian Government, AusAID

ASHM has been awarded grant funding under the Australian Leadership Awards (ALA) - Fellowships program, managed by AusAID. The program provides funding for short term training, research and professional development for fellows from the Asia-Pacific region to be run in Australia. The ALA Fellowships focus on developing knowledge and skills to assist current and future leaders to contribute to development within their own countries as well as the Asia-Pacific region.

In collaboration with several Australian HIV/AIDS organisations, ASHM has developed a one month training program that will provide the fellows with short courses in their respective fields over the month in June/July that the Fellows are in Australia. These organisations include:

- Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations
- National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS
- National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research
- National Centre in HIV Social Research
- National Serology Reference Laboratory and NSW State Reference Laboratory
- Victorian Department of Health - Blood Born Virus/STI Program

The Program will demonstrate the importance of understanding a range of issues and areas when implementing and allocating resources to HIV policies and programs.

The eight fellows were selected in consultation with the National Department of Health Papua New Guinea, the AusAID Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Project based in Fiji and the Secretariat for the Pacific Community. Five Papua New Guineans, two Solomon Islanders and one Fijian have been selected on the basis of their roles and responsibilities in managing the roll out of HIV programs in their respective countries.

The fellowships program will begin in Sydney on 25 June 2007, and will include attendance at the ASHM International Short Course in HIV and Related Issues and the 4th International AIDS Society Conference. Fellows will return home on 28 July 2007.

HIV Matters

The latest edition of ASHM's *HIV Matters* was published in February 2007. This issue includes articles on the delivery and expansion of global programs, the Australian Government's contribution to the response in Asia and the Pacific, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS, Australia's policy on trade and intellectual property, and the challenges faced by various populations and social groups affected by HIV in Asia and Pacific regions. Download a copy from: www.ashm.org.au/international-pubs/

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



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