

NEWS FLASH E- BULLETIN



National AIDS Commission
Responding to HIV/AIDS in Belize

March 9, 2012

PASMO Launches Website

On February 23, 2012, PASMO Belize launched its new informative and interactive website called And What Now . This online resource aims to serve as a useful Internet source of information for those living with HIV/AIDS or affected by the virus and is part of a regional initiative across Central America in support of increased access to helpful information. The And What Now website contains pertinent information on HIV, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, legal assistance surrounding HIV as well as highly interactive features such as local testimonial uploads and self help sections where responses to personal questions are provided within 48 hours. The development of this site is a remarkable achievement in our national prevention and HIV education efforts. Now, for the first time, the HIV+ community has an interactive and locally relevant source developed especially to address their pressing questions, concerns and need for helpful HIV information. The site offers access to both general and registered users via a unique identifier code. To check out the new website , please visit www.andwhatnow.info by [CLICKING HERE](#).



Women's Month 2012

The month of March is celebrated as Women's month with March 8 recognized as International Women's Day. In recognition of this month's importance in highlighting women's roles in education, health and social development as well as the greater need for empowerment of vulnerable girls and women, the Women's Department has lead the development of a full schedule along with partner agencies to promote women's empowerment initiatives. Key manifestation of these endeavors are revealed in activities such as women in arts exhibitions; sessions on sexual violence, preparing for adolescence in girls and boys, education awareness on teen pregnancy and sexual reproductive rights; health fairs; leadership and team building workshops for young women; and an annual women's summit. The Women's Department and their partner agencies are commended for their relentless efforts galvanizing greater commitments aimed at empowering disadvantaged women and reducing the gaping disparities of gender inequality and inequity. Be sure to show your support for Women empowerment by participating in one or more of these activities which are all listed on our website.



NAC's Network Upgrade

The National AIDS Commission Secretariat is pleased to inform partners that our computer network and website www.nacbelize.org have recently been upgraded through the support of a CDB grant and now offers a number of improved and secured features such as:

1. A licensed professional Anti-Malware Protection System
2. A secure firewall and reliable server with large data storage capacity
3. Ungraded website with configuration and hosting

These figures allows for communications with the secretariat to remain secure, free from threats, and for the gradual expansion and updating of our site to serve as a substantial repository of helpful documents to the public. We invite everyone to visit our upgraded website. Over the next two weeks we will be linking partner agency websites to ours so if you have a website please inform the NAC Secretariat and we will be happy to promote your site via ours.

Upcoming Marketing/BCC Training

From March 15 - 17, almost 40 participants from District Committees and the NAC IEC Committee, will benefit from a marketing and behavior change communication workshop at the Belize Biltmore Plaza. The NSP 2012-16 calls for increased coordination of efforts as well as the scaling up of targeted prevention initiatives among those most vulnerable especially youths, FSW and MSM among others. Recognizing the limited understanding of and familiarity with the principles and processes of social marketing to create behavior change, the three day workshop aims to strengthen capacity building in conceptualizing, planning and executing targeted media campaigns. Human Rights and Gender Responsive approaches will be mainstreamed throughout this marketing and BCC workshop. Also important to note, is that this training is the first of four training sessions that will be conducted in collaboration with UNDP to increase the capacity, leadership and coordination of District Committees.

A New Dawn



March 8 2012 marks a new day in Belize's political leadership. Votes have now been casted and the United Democratic Party remains dominant with 17 elected representatives of 31. While there are many lessons to be learned from this election, there is also value in looking to the new configuration of our government for maximum impact. In such a close election and mix of the country's two primary parties, Belize's better chances of moving forward lies in the clear leadership abilities of those newly elected officials to establish common goals in the best interest of the electorate. The People of Belize have democratically and formally expressed their confidence in those who they believe will do the best job of advancing their development needs as a society and in all aspects of life including economically and socially. Recognizing the many challenges that the nation faces in its development nationally in education, health, and economy which is only acerbated by the external challenges in climate change and in the global economy, duty bearers have a continued monumental task. These elected representatives are colossally tasked with providing good governance that promotes and supports development initiatives that has the greatest impact for the greatest number of the Belizean people in improving their quality of life in a very measurable, equitable, democratic and transparent way. This is essentially the new pact that the people have made with its newly elected government. The people of Belize promises to collaborate towards this end, with the assistance of all civil society and development partners, while building on previous successes and remaining vigilant of our country's progress.

The NAC Secretariat congratulates all Belizeans and The United Democratic Party and trust that as a nation we continue to uphold the very bedrock upon which our constitution was built on. The overarching principles enshrined in the Preamble to Belize's Constitution which applies to all citizens are the acknowledgement of the supremacy of God; faith in human rights and fundamental freedom; the position of the family in a society of free men and free institutions; the dignity of the human person; and the equal and inalienable rights of all people endowed by their creator. For further reflection, the below is the fourth of five tenets in the Preamble to our constitution which beautifully embodies most of these principles:

recognize that men and institutions remain free only when freedom is founded upon respect for moral and spiritual values and upon the rule of law; require policies of state which protect and safeguard the unity, freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belize; which eliminate economic and social privilege and disparity among the citizens of Belize whether by race, ethnicity, color, creed, disability or sex; which ensures gender equality; which protect the rights of the individual to life, liberty, basic education, basic health, the right to vote in elections, the right to work and the pursuit of happiness; which protect the identity, dignity and social and cultural values of Belizeans, including Belize's indigenous peoples; which preserve the right of the individual to the ownership of private property and the right to operate private businesses; which prohibit the exploitation of man by man or by the state; which ensure a just system of social security and welfare; which protect the environment; which promote international peace, security and co-operation among nations, the establishment of a just and equitable international economic and social order in the world with respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings among nations;



INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Press Release

GLOBAL FUND SEES GERMANY'S CONTRIBUTION AS RECOGNITION OF NEW DIRECTION

Date : 08 March 2012

Geneva - The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria said an announcement today by Germany of a EUR 50 million contribution was a clear endorsement of new measures to improve financial oversight and management.

Dirk Niebel, Germany's Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, announced at a news conference in Berlin that Germany, which last year suspended contributions to the Global Fund, has now made the first quarterly payment of a EUR 200 million contribution this year.

"I see progress is moving very fast," said Mr. Niebel at the news conference, referring to far-reaching reforms at the Global Fund implemented by Gabriel Jaramillo, who became General Manager on 1 February.

Mr. Niebel and Mr. Jaramillo agreed that the changes at the Global Fund were setting new standards to better manage risk and financial oversight. Mr. Niebel said he was confident that Germany would make all its payments this year if the pace of reform is maintained.

Mr. Jaramillo said changes at the Global Fund would accelerate in the coming months, with the aim of improving overall efficiency and ensuring that its grant management is impeccable.

"We are committed to do even better what we already do best which is to save lives " Mr Jaramillo

said at the news conference. "We want to assure Minister Niebel that German taxpayer money is being handled effectively to achieve the best possible results."

Germany is the fourth largest donor to the Global Fund, having pledged over EUR 1.5 billion since 2002. This includes EUR 600 million for the period 2011-13, in yearly instalments of EUR 200 million each.

In his first month at the Global Fund, Mr. Jaramillo has streamlined its organizational structure and sharpened the focus on grant management in countries with the highest burden of disease.

Cuba to test new AIDS vaccine on humans

HAVANA, March 7 - Cuba's top biotech teams have successfully tested a new AIDS vaccine on mice, and are ready to soon begin human testing, a leading researcher told a biotechnology conference in Havana on Monday.



Cuban activists in the fight against AIDS. Cuba spends more than US\$200 million a year on its AIDS prevention and care programs, including free care with antiretrovirals, some of them Cuban-made. - AFP pic

"The new AIDS trial vaccine already was tested successfully (on mice) and now we are preparing a very small, tightly controlled phase one clinical trial" with HIV-positive patients who are not in the advanced stages of disease, researcher Enrique Iglesias said. Iglesias, who heads up the vaccine development team at the Biotech and Genetic Engineering Center (CIGB) here, was speaking at the International Biotech Conference-Havana 2012, which started Monday in Cuba's capital.

He told the crowd at the convention centre that the vaccine TERA-VAC-HIV-1 was made from recombinant proteins aiming "to cause a cellular response against the (HIV) virus." While upbeat, the Cuban expert was quick to downplay high hopes for a long-awaited successful AIDS vaccine.

"So far, there have been more than 100 clinical tests (on humans) with HIV" in Cuba and other countries, "and all of them have failed," he stressed.

Cuba, the Americas' only one-party Communist-ruled state, spends more than US\$200 million (RM601.8 million) a year on its AIDS prevention and care programs, including free care with antiretrovirals, some of them Cuban-made.

The CIGB, which groups about 20 research units on Havana's leafy western end, is the engine behind a major Cuban export: biotech products including vaccines and other drugs. The Caribbean country exports US\$400 million a year in these products, making them its official number-two export after nickel.

Some 600 scientists from about 38 countries are taking part in the event including Nobel-

winning US chemist Peter Agre, also a medical doctor and molecular biologist. -
AFPrelaxnews.com

Source: themalaysianinsider.com

Once-a-month HIV drug maintains good levels for prevention; few side-effects so far

Gus Cairns

Published: 07 March 2012

The first trial in humans of an injectable, once-a-month formulation of an HIV drug has found that drug levels were maintained at a level that should in theory be high enough to protect recipients against infection, and that the drug has so far produced very few side effects. The research was presented at the 19th Conference on Opportunistic Infections (CROI), in Seattle.

The small trial at the St Stephen's AIDS Trust (SSAT) at London's Chelsea and Westminster Hospital gave 27 women and six men a single injection of the long-acting formulation of the drug rilpivirine, which was licensed as an oral HIV treatment last year as Edurant and is also in the tenofovir/FTC/rilpivirine pill Complera. Rilpivirine is a non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NNRTI) drug and is especially suitable to be turned into a long-lasting injectable form because the daily dose of it required to suppress HIV is very small.

No other HIV drugs are currently in a usable long-lasting injectable form, which will limit the use of long-acting rilpivirine (RPV-LA) in combination therapy, but it could conceivably make an ideal candidate as a prevention drug, as people would not need to remember to take it every day. Other preventative drugs already formulated as monthly injections include the injectable contraceptive Depo Provera and some anti-psychotic drugs. SSAT recruited 27 HIV-negative women aged 18 to 50, more than 50% of them black African or Caribbean, for the trial and gave them one of three doses of RPV-LA as an intramuscular injection: 300, 600 or 1200mg (the oral dose of RPV is 25 mg/day). Drug levels were then measured over the course of the next twelve weeks in blood, vaginal fluid and in vaginal tissue samples. A substudy gave six men the 600mg dose and measured RPV-LA levels in blood, rectal fluid and rectal tissue samples.

Thirty days after injection, blood and vaginal fluid levels of rilpivirine were about 60 nanograms per millilitre (ng/ml) in both blood and vaginal fluid in women given the 600mg dose, and about 80 and 120ng/ml respectively in women given the 1200mg dose. Blood levels in men given the 600mg dose were about 70ng/ml at 30 days. For comparison, the trough levels of rilpivirine in people taking daily oral doses is about 140ng/ml; but the EC50 (the amount needed to reduce viral replication by 50%) in newly-infected T-cells is 27ng/ml. It is thought these levels should be adequate to prevent HIV infection.

Over the time period, levels of drug seen were about 80% higher in vaginal fluid than in blood in women taking the 300mg dose and about 20% higher in the other two doses:

conversely, drug levels in vaginal tissue were about 25% lower than in blood, and 50% lower up to day 14 in the 300mg dose group.

Drug levels in rectal fluid were low but it is thought this was due to sample contamination: concentrations in rectal tissue were about the same as concentrations in blood.

The trial participants complained of very few side-effects apart from tenderness and some swelling at the injection site. There were no allergic reactions, psychological symptoms or effects on heart rate. Safety is of course a major consideration in a drug that remains in the body for up to twelve weeks.

Researcher Akil Jackson said, "There is an obvious need in HIV prevention and treatment for formulations that reduce the need for the user to depend on daily administration," but added that these were very preliminary results and did not establish what dose would actually be protective. Further safety and drug-level studies in HIV-negative volunteers are to be conducted at the University of Pittsburgh, home of the Microbicide Trials Network, before the drug is given to volunteers with HIV.

Source: www.aidsmap.com