XIII International AIDS Conference - Durban, South Africa

The theme for the 13th International AIDS Conference was "Break the Silence," and for the first time in the history of the International AIDS Conferences, the 6-day conference was held on the continent of Africa.

The conference was organized into five Scientific Tracks: Basic Science; Clinical Science; Epidemiology, Prevention and Public Health; Social Science; and Rights, Politics, Commitment, and Action. The Durban Conference had upwards of 14,000 physicians, scientists, public health officials, and community leaders in attendance.

Representing UAB at the conference were Dr. Sten Vermund, Dr. Jeffrey Stringer, Dr. Craig Wilson, Julia Stout, Dr. Kathleen Squires, Dr. Pauline Jolly, and 14 MIRT students from the U.S who accompanied Dr. Jolly.

Dr. Vermund chaired the session on cost-effective interventions to reduce mother-to-child transmission. Dr. Jeffrey Stringer followed with an oral presentation on the same topic. Dr. Kathleen Squires gave a state-of-the-art lecture and presented a late breaker poster outlining the 48-week results of the ATLANTIC study, which is a multicenter, multinational clinical trial.

Dr. Sten Vermund pointed out that "The conference was a watershed in international meetings in that it was the first International AIDS Conference held in a developing nation setting. While basic science was not extensively represented at this conference, it continues to be one of the best venues for discussions of therapies that might be more suitable for resource-limited settings, for epidemiologic updates, for prevention of HIV scientific findings and case studies, and for social sciences and HIV. Data presented at the conference suggesting a substantial decline in the number of sexual partners corresponding to significantly lower HIV incidence rates among young adults in Uganda gave us a strong indication that sexual fidelity, not often discussed on the same level as condom use, may be the single most powerful prevention tool. The Ugandans have succeeded in behavior change to reduce partner exchange, and data from Thailand reinforce that this can be done with adequate education, political leadership, and effective social marketing of these concepts. A constellation of observations contributes to the take-home message of the need for HIV prevention implementation and research, including the devastating impact of HIV on the social fabric of Africa and Asia, the tremendous economic costs incurred by loss of productive young adults, and the unavailability of modern medicines to resource-poor settings. Without further investments into behavior change, STD control, and condom promotion now, and research into HIV vaccines, microbicides, and low-cost therapies for the future, the situation for much of the world will continue to deteriorate."

Dr. Kathleen Squires also noted that "The conference conformed to the theme 'Breaking the Silence' by paying attention to the magnitude of the epidemic and inviting a broad range of individuals to discuss human rights, access to care issues, gender power inequities and their effect on the epidemic, societal, and governmental commitment for affecting change. The conference highlighted that scientists, both basic and clinical, can and should become vocal crusaders in support of affected individuals and the scientific truth. For detailed information on the Durban conference, visit www.aids2000.com.

World Bank Proposes $500 Million Package for AIDS Programs in Africa

The World Bank has proposed a U.S. $500 million dollar package for AIDS programs in Africa. The announcement of the program was timed to coincide with the XIIIth AIDS Conference. These funds will be made available to any African country which sets up a national AIDS program. Funding will be made available for all activities authorized by the national plan. More information can be found at www.worldbank.org.
Howell and Elizabeth Ann Heflin Center for Human Genetics at UAB

Construction on the new human genetics building is moving along steadily. The new Genetics Center will be located at 20th Street South between 7th Avenue and University Boulevard. The center will be eight stories, with 145,000 square feet of space for genetic testing, counseling, and research.

UAB intends to develop a full range of genetic medicine, from family counseling and clinical services to bench-top research into the genetic causes of disease.

CFAR members, Beatrice Hahn, M.D.; George Shaw, M.D., Ph.D.; and Casey Morrow, Ph.D. will move their laboratories to the genetics building upon completion of the facility. Target completion date is set for fall 2000.

"Mulligan Receives Human Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN) Funding"

Dr. Mark Mulligan is lead investigator for the newly funded UAB HVTN site. The award will provide more than $6 million in research funds over the next 5 years. HVTN is a clinically based network designed to develop and test preventive HIV vaccines.

"Vermund Appointed to OARAC"

The Center is pleased to announce that Dr. Sten Vermund has been appointed to the Office of AIDS Research Advisory Council. This advisory group is responsible for advising the NIH on the allocation of the $1.8 billion/year of HIV-related research monies. Congratulations!

AIDS Tryathlon Memorabilia

AIDS Tryathlon 2000 T-shirts and caps are still available in M, L, and XL. The prices are $5.00 for short sleeve and $10.00 for long sleeves shirts and caps. Contact Rob McDonald at 4-2437 for more information.

Special Meeting Lectures

The Center for AIDS Research hosts Dinner, Faculty, and Special Lectures. If you have suggestions for a guest speaker for one of these lecture series, please contact Rob McDonald at 4-2437 or e-mail at rwm@uab.edu.

Upcoming Meetings and Conferences

For information regarding upcoming meetings and conferences, please go to: www.uabcfar.uab.edu/meetings.

CFAR Conference Room

The conference room in Suite 256 is available for meetings. The conference room offers seating for up to 20 people, as well as equipment for LCD and slide projection. Please call Rob McDonald at 4-2437 or e-mail at rwm@uab.edu.

CFAR News

If you have a topic of interest for the Quest newsletter, please contact Vicki Byrd at 5-7045 or e-mail vhibyrd@uab.edu.

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