Columbia University Alumni Summit
Focuses on AIDS@30

More than 175 Mailman School alumni gathered for the School’s 3rd Annual Alumni Summit on June 16, along with faculty, staff, and students. The summit’s theme was the 30th anniversary of the outbreak of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the U.S. To mark the occasion, a panel of scientists and research leaders in the field explored the latest medical breakthroughs and achievements in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and addressed how education and scaled-up prevention can help stop the spread of this disease in the U.S. and globally.

Dean Linda Fried made introductory remarks and welcomed returning alumni. Dr. Ariel Pablos-Mendez, managing director, The Rockefeller Foundation, and recently nominated for the position of assistant administrator for Global Health at USAID, served as moderator for the distinguished panel of experts. The panelists:

Quarraisha Abdool Karim, Salim Abdool Karim, Wafaa El-Sadr, professor of Epidemiology at Mailman and director of International Center for AIDS Care and Treatment Programs (ICAP); and Monica Sweeney, assistant commissioner, Bureau of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Among the many provocative questions discussed by the panel were: How does the HIV/AIDS research agenda translate into policy? What sorts of collaborations are needed to prevent HIV/AIDS? What is the role of academic institutions?

Panelists noted that many new approaches are on the horizon for disease prevention and treatment, including the use of microbicidal gels to prevent male-to-female transmission—a breakthrough approach developed by the husband-wife team of the Drs. Abdool Karim.

While the virus continually undergoes rapid evolution—... continued on page 2.....
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….a significant scientific challenge to prevention and treatment—it remains within our grasp to end the epidemic if the scientific community continues to be creative, open-minded, and takes an activist role.

They also stated how it is imperative to use all the “tools that are available in our toolbox” to stop the epidemic. They noted the critical role that schools of public health must play -- to train and create the next generation of scientists -- for achieving this goal.

At a reception following the panel, alumni had a chance to reconnect with their fellow graduates. The Allan Rosenfield Alumni Award for Excellence was presented at the reunion dinner to Drs. Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim, who are faculty members and graduates of the class of 1989.

Recognized for their exceptional contributions to public health research and education, Drs. Abdool Karim have achieved what the National Institutes of Health deemed a "significant milestone in HIV prevention" by developing the first-ever microbicide to effectively prevent HIV infection in women. The breakthrough made global headlines when announced at last summer International AIDS Conference in Vienna.

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In July the VOICE team at the eThekwini Clinical Research Site hosted an event for participants to celebrate the end of accrual in VOICE.

In addition to thanking the participants for their continued participation and commitment to the study, the event, which was attended by 170 enrolled participants, was also used as a platform to disseminate new information in HIV prevention, including the recent results from the iPrEx and FeMPrEP studies. Participants were also reminded of the purpose of the VOICE trial and other important issues relating to product adherence, contraception, pregnancy and retention were discussed.

After being provided with the updates, participants were asked their opinions on the VOICE trial and what the implications of the other HIV prevention trial results may be for the VOICE study.

The importance of involving males in HIV prevention research was also highlighted and participants were encouraged to invite or come to site with their partners for HIV counselling and testing services as well as to access STI treatment should the need arise. They were also informed that the site hosts periodic male involvement workshops where partners are educated broadly on the VOICE study, issues which relate to HIV and AIDS, as well as reasons as to why men are encouraged to get involved.

VOICE participants were also asked to share their current and past experiences or perceptions of clinical trial participation. A participant shared her thoughts, “… At first I experienced some difficulties in swallowing the tablets and some side effects such as headaches and nausea, but now I am used to my thing, even at home they remind me when it is Generations time (local television soapie) that ‘hhayi bo’ (hey), it is time, do not forget….”

- Ms Londiwe Luthuli on behalf of the VOICE Recruitment Team

Dr Gonasagrie Nair, VOICE trial Investigator of Record, at the eThekwini Clinical Research Site addressing the participants

Announcement:
The next International Microbicides Conference will be held from Sunday, 15 April 2012 to Wednesday, 18 April 2012 in Sydney, Australia, at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Important dates:
Abstract Submission: Thursday 17 November 2011
Scholarship Application: Thursday 17 November 2011
Notification of Acceptance: Friday 16 December 2011
Early Bird Registration: Monday 31 January 2012
Late Breaker Abstracts: Sunday 13 February 2012
Accommodation Booking: Friday 9 March 2012
Standard Registration: Thursday 15 March 2012
Conference Registration: Friday 30 March 2012

For more information visit the Conference website: www.microbicides2012.org
2011 Scientific publications


*this list continues from the previous newsletter - providing all CAPRISA publications in 2011

Upcoming Conference & Workshop Reminders

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