WHO Consultation on HIV PrEP for women and adolescent girls

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Technical Consultation on HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis for Women and Adolescent Girls brought together public health and clinical experts at a two-day meeting in Durban on 27-28 September.

The meeting, which was convened by the WHO and hosted by CAPRISA, was attended by representatives from WHO, UNITAID, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Foundation for Professional Development, CHAI, Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, Pangaea, JHPIEGO, as well as leading HIV research organisations in Africa. During the consultation experts on HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), sexual and reproductive health and antenatal care services (including prevention of mother-to-child transmission) and HIV services for adolescents, highlighted issues that have implications for the implementation of PrEP for women and adolescent girls.

These include PrEP safety in pregnancy; the utility and feasibility of including PrEP during the antenatal and breastfeeding period; data to support prioritisation of PrEP services for women and adolescent girls; and service delivery approaches for different settings and populations.

The outcomes from the meeting will be incorporated into the WHO PrEP implementation guidelines. “These guidelines will provide countries with programmatic guidance for the safe, strategic and cost effective implementation of PrEP for women and adolescent girls including pregnant women and those who are breastfeeding,” said Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim, associate scientific Director CAPRISA.
Scientists appointed to Advisory committee

Drs Kogieleum Naidoo and Halima Dawood from CAPRISA have been invited to serve on the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Provincial Clinical Governance and Pharmacovigilance Advisory Committee. As committee members they will provide technical support to district managers in KZN to strengthen Clinical Governance and Pharmacovigilance on the Antiretroviral Program. The advisory committee provides technical guidance and support to clinicians and program managers on the management of complicated patients and those with virological failures and the assessment and monitoring of access to quality care in facilities that provide HIV and TB services in KZN. Dr Naidoo is the head of Treatment in HIV and TB and Dr Dawood is a research associate at CAPRISA.

Induction into AAS early career development initiative

Dr Christina Thobakgale-Tshabalala, who is a Research Associate at CAPRISA, was among the first cohort of 15 young scientists selected by the African Academy of Sciences for a programme to recognise, mentor, and help early career professionals develop into world class research leaders. The 15, who are PhD holders and below the age of 40, were selected from the five regions of Africa to be AAS Affiliates for a five-year period running from 2016 to 2020. They were inducted at the AAS 10th General Assembly taking place in Kasane, Botswana.

AAS will work with their institutions to offer them training in areas that include proposal writing and manuscript preparation to help them win more grants and improve their publication records, respectively. Other training will be offered in ethical research conduct and intellectual property to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge needed to develop their careers. Berhanu Abegaz, the AAS Executive Director said: “Unless we provide opportunities to attract, train and retain our young scientists, especially those who are showing promise in their different fields, through a rewarding career path we will continue to lose them.” Africa loses 20,000 thousands of professionals every year to developed countries some of whom are scientists who are frustrated by the lack of infrastructure and mentors.

AAS Affiliates will be mentored by experts in their fields from across the globe, some of whom are senior scientists drawn from AAS Fellows. Mentorship is a conduit for young professionals to gain the knowledge they need to be successful in their careers.

Post-docs awarded prestigious fellowships

Drs Bhiman and Ditse, postdoctoral fellows hosted by Prof Lynn Morris at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases have been awarded prestigious fellowships.

Dr Jinal Bhiman was awarded the 2016 James Gear Fellowship, which is presented to outstanding candidates to enable them to develop their research careers in international academic institutions. In early 2017, Jinal will join Prof Dennis Burton’s laboratory at the Scripps Research Institute as a Postdoctoral Research Associate, where she will be involved in the development of first generation trimeric HIV envelope immunogens needed for a preventative HIV vaccine.

Dr Zanele Ditse was awarded the prestigious 2016 Hillel Friedl and Fellowship from the University of the Witwatersrand for her project entitled: Characterization of broadly neutralizing antibody responses in HIV-1 subtype C infected children. This 3 year Fellowship is intended for young individuals who have completed a doctorate in the past five years and who wish to conduct cutting-edge research in a topic relevant to the health domain.
CAPRISA laboratories receives a clean audit

CAPRISA congratuates the Laboratory team for receiving an excellent audit by FHI360/Westat. This follows an audit from 26-29 July for studies that include IMPAACT, HVTN, HPTN and MTN.

The CAPRISA main laboratory as well as the site laboratories at the eThekwini and Vulindlela Research Clinics underwent intense audit of the Quality Management Systems for compliance to the ISO 15189:2012 Standard and Code of Federal Regulations 42 part 21. The audit reports received on 31st August and 9th September “had not a single finding or observation at all of the CAPRISA Laboratories”, explained Ms Natasha Samsunder Director CAPRISA Laboratories. “This was an amazing accolade and evidence of the strong quality management system in place across all CAPRISA laboratories. “ She lauded laboratory staff and said, “credit for this amazing achievement has to be awarded to all of the CAPRISA Laboratory staff who ensure that quality is the highest priority and adherence to the quality management system is effectively integrated into daily functioning of the laboratories.” CAPRISA laboratories are accredited by the South African National Accreditation System (SANAS) as well as international laboratory accreditation authorities like DAIDS DCLOT and PPD. The laboratory quality management system is in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations Title 42: Public Health, Part 493 Laboratory Requirements: Title 21: Food and Drugs, Part 58 Good Laboratory Practices for Non-Clinical Laboratory Studies and ISO International Standard 15189 Medical Laboratories for quality and competency requirements.

Prof Lynn Morris inducted into the Royal Society of South Africa

Professor Lynn Morris head of the HIV Virology Section at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) and CAPRISA Research Associate was inducted as a fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa on 27 September. She delivered a public lecture at the event titled ‘Closing in on an AIDS Vaccine’ that stimulated a lot of discussion. Lynn is a founding member of CAPRISA directing the antibody studies that included the isolation of the CAP256-VRC26.25 monoclonal antibody that is soon to be tested in the CAP012 trial. She is an NRF A-rated scientist and has published over 200 papers and holds an H-index of 51. The event was attended by Professors Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim, Prof Thumbi Ndung’u, Prof Jo-Ann From L-R (Front Row): Shannie Kamal, Natasha Samsunder, Phindile Tshabalala. Back Row (L-R): Panji Pillay, Zanele Mchunu, Lenine Liebenberg, Athena Lemon, Ross Cromarty, Cheli Kambaran, Jacqui Kasavvan, Damien Sookoo, Sahil Tulsi, Sanele Mhlungu, Ashley Singh

Professor Lynn Morris being inducted into the Royal Society of South Africa by Em. Professor Cesareo Dominguez, a Theoretical Physicist from UCT. The book on the left is a Fellowship Register which she signed. The register began when the Society was renamed in 1908 and contains signatures of some famous scientists including Robert Broom, Raymond Dart, Phillip Tobias, George Ellis, etc.
Scientific papers published in 2016

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Abstracts submitted for review | Manuscripts submitted for review | Ancillary studies submitted for review |
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iSpotU awards

The CAPRISA iSpotU Innovation Award is an initiative implemented in 2015 to recognise and reward employees for innovation and initiative, which demonstrate that “There Is a Better Way” of doing a task, process or system. The innovation has to add value to the organisation and/or improve CAPRISA’s organisational reputation. Recipients of the award during September included:

**For enhancing CAPRISA’s reputation and stature:**

**For suggestions or design of innovative approach, solution or idea for the improvement to a working practice or process within the team/department/organisation:**
- Yajna Duki

**For going over and above his normal duties and assisting:**
- Mahomed Mather

*continuation from previous newsletter*