PrEP: One step closer to ending the HIV epidemic

In a series of three articles, published in The Lancet, the New England Journal of Medicine and Science, Professor Salim Abdool Karim makes a case in support of PrEP.

Two years since the first announcement in Vienna that antiretrovirals (ARVs) can prevent HIV infection, the first ARV, Truvada, has been approved by the FDA as pre-exposure prophylactic (PrEP). This record-speed development pathway, in conjunction with treatment for prevention, have created new hope of bringing the HIV epidemic to an end.

In recent weeks, three publications by CAPRISA Director, Professor Salim Abdool Karim in The Lancet, New England Journal of Medicine and Science, have argued for and highlighted the implementation challenges in using PrEP as an essential component of the fight against AIDS.

In The Lancet, he argues that PrEP would be advantageous in the face of disempowerment among young women in southern Africa.
Community representatives oversee sample destruction

In May 2012, representatives from the Community Advisory Board (CAB) of Vulindlela and eThekwini clinics visited the CAPRISA laboratories in Durban to oversee the destruction of the CAPRISA 004 trial samples.

The CAB members witnessed the disposal of nearly 10,000 samples belonging to 73 CAP 004 participants, who—during the informed consent process—had not given their consent for their samples to be used for research studies which were not related to CAP 004.

In accordance with their wishes, the samples were destroyed after all study procedures relating to the CAP 004 trial (including secondary objectives of the main study protocol) were concluded.

While welcoming the CAB members, Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim stated that this was a significant milestone, as this was the first time in the history of CAPRISA that CAB representatives were witness to the destruction of samples.

She also noted the importance of transparency and the need for members of the community, in which the studies had taken place, to be a part of the process.

The community representatives expressed their appreciation for being able to witness the sample destruction, as well as to understand the process.

The CAB members also took advantage of the rare opportunity to conduct a general tour of the laboratory, where they asked questions about the day-to-day operation of the facility.

The samples are sealed before being placed into a plastic-lined bin.

The box containing the samples is securely sealed before incineration.

Continued from front page

Africa who are most at risk of HIV infection. “To rely on her partner to come forward to test, to agree to take antiretroviral therapy, and to take his ART with high adherence, all for her protection, puts a woman’s risk of acquiring HIV back in the hands of men, thereby disempowering women and undermining their efforts to control their risk of HIV.”

In the New England Journal of Medicine, he participates in the Clinical Decisions interactive feature, where, based on two patient case vignettes (a 46 year old MSM and a South African female adolescent heterosexual), he explains the clinical approach that he would adopt in assessing their HIV risk and explains why he would recommend PrEP in both instances.

As the AIDS 2012 Conference approaches, his editorial in Science calls for guidelines on PrEP, as well as for support for rapid scale up for its provision in constrained health systems.

Further reading:
The Lancet, 18 May 2012
Antiretroviral prophylaxis for HIV prevention reaches a key milestone
www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(12)60786-7/fulltext
New England Journal of Medicine, 11 July 2012
Preexposure Prophylaxis for HIV Prevention
Science—13 July 2012
An AIDS-Free Generation?
www.sciencemag.org/content/337/6091/133.full
New health goals for KwaZulu Natal Province

In presenting the provincial health department budget, KwaZulu Natal MEC for Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, made reference to CAPRISA’s studies concerning the high risk of HIV infection amongst young women in South Africa.

Dr Dhlomo stated that the “increasing HIV prevalence among 15-29 year old females may be indicative of early sexual involvement with older men”.

He went onto to comment that the results of the study had led to the Anti-Sugar Daddy billboard advertising campaign being conceived, which had been launched by the Province earlier in the year. The campaign sought to promote community leadership about the issue and to encourage stigma of older men who seek sex with young girls.

Dr Dhlomo tabled a R25.55bn budget addressing five strategic areas of delivery. These included promoting healthy lifestyles; improving mother and child services; increasing treatment, care and support for HIV/AIDS and TB patients; improving health skills and hospital infrastructure; and reducing non-communicable diseases.

SA TB Conference

CAPRISA’s display of its key TB and HIV research studies attracted over 200 visitors at its stand at the 3rd SA TB Conference.

The conference was held in June 2012 at Durban’s International Convention Centre.

DIFD visit to CAPRISA

The UK Government’s Department for International Development (DFID) visited CAPRISA’s clinics in June 2012 as part of a fact-finding tour of HIV prevention work in Southern Africa.

Dr Sibongile Gumbi visits CAPRISA clinic

Newly appointed Group Executive: Biotechnology for Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), Dr Sibongile Gumbi, was hosted by CAPRISA in June 2012 for discussions about matters of mutual interest.

An initiative of the South African Department of Science and Technology, TIA is mandated to support and enable technology innovation across all sectors of the economy in order to achieve socioeconomic benefits for South Africa, thereby enhancing its global competitiveness. It aims to do this by enhancing South Africa’s capacity to translate local research and development into commercial technology products and services.

TIA is a donor partner of the CAPRISA 008 study.
Research papers published in 2012


Grobler A, Abdool Karim S. Declining adherence is a more likely explanation than frailty of the apparent decline in efficacy in the CAPRISA 004 trial: response to O’Hagan et al. AIDS 2012; 26: DOI:10.1097/QAD.0b013e328335ce08

# continued from previous issue

Scientific Reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstracts submitted for review</th>
<th>Manuscripts submitted for review</th>
<th>Ancillary studies submitted for review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total #</td>
<td>Cumulative</td>
<td>Total #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# for month, ^ since committee initiation

Conference & Workshop Reminders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Abstracts</th>
<th>Registration</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>