



## OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE - DAY 3

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Researchers discuss HIV and Inflammation, Prevention Research and Structural Factors including Stigma and Punitive Laws at IAS 2013 Tuesday Plenary Session**

**Tuesday, 2 July 2013 (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)** – Today at the second plenary of the 7<sup>th</sup> IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS 2013) speakers examined the issue of immune activation in HIV disease, updated on pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and discussed the social determinants and structural barriers at play in Eastern Europe and Central Asia’s HIV epidemics.

“There are still too many unknowns when it comes to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and key affected populations (KAPS),” said Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, IAS 2013 International Chair and International AIDS Society President. “At a time when groups such as men who have sex with men (MSM) and female sex workers are bearing the brunt of the epidemic in South East Asia, new prevention tools are needed to ensure these vulnerable groups are protected”.

“Having heard so much about the success of harm reduction in Malaysia these past few days it is a crime against science that nearly one million people who inject drugs have become unnecessarily infected with HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia,” said IAS 2013 Local Co-Chair Adeeba Kamarulzaman, Director of the Centre of Excellence for Research in AIDS (CERiA) and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. “Those governments who are not basing their policies on scientific evidence are facing a stark choice – either accept the harm reduction evidence to bring down HIV infections or ignore it at a huge economic and human cost”.

#### **The Relationship between HIV Disease and Inflammation**

Daniel Douek (USA), Chief of the Human Immunology Section, Vaccine Research Center, National Institutes of Health, in his opening plenary remarks discussed the causes and consequences of immune activation in HIV disease, reviewing various therapeutic options to reduce immune activation and the rationale for doing so including advantages and disadvantages.

## **State of the evidence from Oral and Topical PrEP Efficacy Trials: What we know and what we still need to know**

With PrEP at the forefront of current biomedical HIV prevention research, Javier R. Lama (Peru), Director of HIV Prevention Interventions Studies at the IMPACTA PERU Clinical Trials Unit, Asociación Civil Impacta Salud y Educación, examined existing PrEP efficacy data and key questions and issues ahead. Recently, proof-of-concept clinical trials of vaginally applied and daily oral tenofovir-based PrEP proved to be efficacious in preventing HIV-1 infection in different populations at risk, while other PrEP trials failed to show efficacy, raising many questions about applicability of PrEP to diverse populations, adherence promotion and monitoring, optimal dosing intervals, and method of delivery. Studies are being conducted or planned to assess these questions, while other studies are trying to translate positive PrEP findings into programmatic priorities.

Regulatory approvals and guidelines for PrEP vary widely and policymakers, with advocacy from populations at risk, are considering the implications of translating positive PrEP findings into programmatic priorities. It is still unknown which PrEP strategies such as oral or rectal, if efficacious, would work best to prevent HIV infection in populations at risk via unprotected receptive anal intercourse, as well as to whom each strategy would be targeted and the specifics of usage. Nonetheless, it is clear that if these products are found to be efficacious and are launched commercially, users will make choices about how and when to use them based on personal preferences. In addition to advocacy from populations at risk and governmental support of public health rollout, two key aspects of a successful prevention programme include a high-risk population willing to use such a method and providers willing to deliver it.

### **Social Determinants: Structural Barriers**

Barbara de Zaldondo, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Executive Director for Programme, UNAIDS, summarized the evidence and expert consensus that structural factors -- especially socio-cultural, economic and political factors, including stigma and punitive laws -- largely account for the spread of HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA). Groups vulnerable to HIV are being left behind in much of the EECA region, and around the world, due to insufficient coverage of rights-based and evidence-informed prevention and treatment services. While EECA countries face low or concentrated HIV epidemics, they are extremely diverse and require local diagnosis, local leadership, and tailored and dynamic responses.

Zaldondo outlined progress in the conceptualization, implementation and measurement of social determinants and structural interventions available to support and enable HIV prevention and treatment programmes and highlight the lack of investment in research and implementation of these approaches. With over 15 structural intervention approaches available to diagnose and shift social barriers to HIV service delivery or uptake, it is time to invest in and appropriately evaluate them. Zaldondo challenged AIDS policymakers and advocates to better utilize social and political strategies to achieve the policy changes that they consistently demand, in the interest of more inclusive and effective HIV responses.

**END**

**Further information:**

**The International AIDS Society (IAS)** is the world's leading independent association of HIV professionals, with over 16,000 members from more than 196 countries working at all levels of the global response to AIDS. The IAS members include researchers from all disciplines, clinicians, public health and community practitioners on the frontlines of the epidemic, as well as policy and programme planners.

The IAS is lead organizer of the IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention, which will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 30 June – 3 July 2013 and custodian of the biennial International AIDS Conference, which will be held in Melbourne, Australia, 20-25 July 2014.

[www.iasociety.org](http://www.iasociety.org) | [www.ias2013.org](http://www.ias2013.org) | [www.aids2014.org](http://www.aids2014.org)

The **Centre of Excellence for Research in AIDS (CERiA)** was established in 2007 to respond to the need to better understand the Malaysian HIV epidemic and to build local capacity in conducting HIV related research. Since its establishment it has become the leading Centre in Malaysia conducting HIV related research in various fields including epidemiology, social behavioural, clinical and laboratory based research.

#### **IAS 2013: Join the conversation**

Get the latest conference updates and share your thoughts and ideas through the IAS 2013 Social Media channels.

We are tweeting – @\_IAS2013 – and hope many of you will tweet along with us, using #IAS2013 to keep the conversation going.

Become a fan of IAS 2013 on Facebook - [www.facebook.com/conferenceIAS2013](http://www.facebook.com/conferenceIAS2013) and stay in touch with the latest conference updates and developments. Tell us why you are coming to Kuala Lumpur and what you hope to gain from IAS 2013.

Join the IAS 2013 LinkedIn group, you are welcome to start new discussions and add your comments to existing threads.

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