



OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE - DAY 1

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SCIENTIFIC OPTIMISM FOR AN AIDS FREE GENERATION STILL FACING MAJOR BARRIERS

As the world's largest open scientific conference on HIV/AIDS begins, scientists warn that the implementation of scientific tools on the ground is still failing to especially reach key affected populations (KAPS) in many parts of the world.

Sunday, 30 June 2013 (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)--Some 4,700 AIDS researchers, scientists, clinicians, community leaders, programme implementers and other participants gathered in Kuala Lumpur for the opening of the 7th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS 2013) have welcomed the rejuvenation of HIV science in recent years but have expressed concern that the scientific optimism for ending AIDS is not even translating into reduced infections amongst key affected populations in many parts of the world.

"We said at the time that the IAS 2011 conference in Rome was a watershed in terms of the scientific breakthroughs that were treatment as prevention and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and since then we've also seen some remarkable developments in HIV cure related research," said Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, IAS 2013 International Chair and International AIDS Society President.

"And the recent assessment by the World Health Organisation (WHO) that Cambodia is on track to become one of the few countries in the world to successfully reverse its HIV epidemic and eliminate new infections by 2020 shows that effective implementation of science in terms of scale up of treatment and prevention is well and truly possible even in very poor countries."

"I am proud that the Malaysian government adopted an evidence-based approach and took the brave decision in 2005 to commit to and invest in harm reduction programmes that addressed what was then an HIV/AIDS epidemic in the country largely driven by injecting drug use," said IAS 2013 Local Co-Chair Adeeba Kamarulzaman, Director of the Centre of Excellence for Research in AIDS and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur.

"However, Malaysia and indeed huge parts of Asia, has a long way to go to match the scientific gains of the past few years with on the ground programmes particularly for other key affected populations such as men who have sex with men, sex workers and transgender people

"It is also untenable that when we have long had the science to prevent mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT), only around 30 per cent of pregnant women are offered an HIV test in East, South and South-East Asia. It is also deeply concerning that across the three same regions only around 16 per cent of HIV-infected pregnant women receive antiretrovirals to

prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. I welcome then, the announcement today by the WHO recommending to universally treat women.”

The IAS 2013 conference will take place against the backdrop this year of two major scientific announcements in the field of HIV cure research.

The Mississippi Baby appears to be the first case of functional cure of an infant following Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) given 30 hours after birth. In the VISCONTI cohort, 14 patients in France have maintained control of their HIV infection for a median of 7.5 years after ART interruption. Lead researcher on the Mississippi Baby study Deborah Persaud and VISCONTI Cohort doctor Laurent Hocqueloux will both speak about early treatment at IAS 2013.

Opening session

Today’s opening session, which began with welcoming remarks by the conference Co-Chairs and the Malaysian Minister of Health, YB Datuk Seri Dr. S Subramaniam, was followed by a community welcome by Andrew Tan, President, myPlus (Malaysian Positive Network). In his remarks, Tan said it was important to recognise the irrefutable proof that treatment IS prevention.

“Prevention is ultimately the key to reversing this tide that has touched many individuals, families and communities,” said Tan. “This is why it is imperative to switch approaches from any moral/religious perspective to a public health perspective. Then we will see the beginning of the end of stigma and discrimination, both key barriers to implementing effective HIV prevention and treatment programmes.”

The opening session also featured a scientific keynote address by Steven Deeks, Professor of medicine in residence at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), titled *The End of AIDS: Treated HIV as a Chronic Disease*.

Deeks reinforced that ART has been a spectacular success to the extent that people were now asking if the end of AIDS was possible. However, he went on to say that despite unprecedented global investments into providing treatment, the vast majority of people with HIV - perhaps more than 20 million - are not on therapy and not doing well.

“For those on treatment and with access to stable, good medical and health networks, AIDS no longer looms as heavy in their lives as it once did but other issues are emerging for this population. Treatment does not fully restore immune health, and as a consequence, a number of inflammation-associated complications such as cardiovascular disease might occur on long term Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART),” said Deeks.

“There are some concerns that the multi-morbidity nature of this now chronic disease will on a global level overwhelm some health care systems and on an individual level may prevent healthy aging.

“Given the problems inherent in treating and caring for a chronic disease that might persist for several decades, a global effort to identify a cure is now underway.”

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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 | www.ias2013.org | 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](https://twitter.com/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 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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