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KENYA AIDS CONTROL PROJECT NEWS



KENYA AIDS
Control Project

University of Manitoba/Nairobi Collaborative Research Group

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MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

Dr. LARRY GELMON MD MPH DTM&H

Welcome to this 1st edition of The Kenya Aids Control Project Newsletter 2013.

In the journey of service delivery at KACP, this year's annual STD/AIDS review meeting which was held at the Southern Mayfair Hotel from 21st January to 25th January, continues the organizations tradition to provide a good platform for scientists and researchers worldwide to communicate their research results and the five (5) day event saw more than 500 people attend.

To further increase services to MARPS in the country, we also entered into a partnership with the STC Casino clinic. This move will see the two organizations provide STI and HIV care, treatment services to clients and regular sex partners of sex workers residing in Nairobi.



MESSAGE FROM THE CLINICAL DIRECTOR



University of Manitoba/Nairobi Collaborative Research Group

On January 20, 1980, a research collaboration began between the departments of Medical Microbiology of the University of Nairobi and the University of Manitoba that has expanded and persists today at the core of HIV/AIDS and infectious diseases research in the country. Originally, the research involved the study of the pathogenesis and transmission of sexually transmitted bacteria (chancroid) between men and women and from infected mothers to their children. With the discovery of HIV/AIDS, the research expanded to include the study of this virus and diseases it caused as well as other sexually transmitted viruses.

The collaborative group worked on a range of infectious diseases but the primary focus has been on HIV/AIDS and over the years a significant amount of information and data from these studies has contributed to the global understanding of the virus and the virus/host interaction.

The project purposed to strengthen the prevention and management of STDs and HIV infection/AIDS by establishing sustainable community activities, and improved STD control services emphasizing women's health and involvement.

The project's model was based on using a "syndromic" approach to STD management, and decentralizing services for STD management to primary (clinic) level.

Thus on January 20, 1980, a research collaboration began between the departments of medical microbiology of the University of Nairobi and the University of Manitoba

On the community side, the project concentrated its efforts on female sex workers through peer education/counselling approach, deriving its rationale from the "core group" theory of STD/HIV transmission. The "core group" theory argues that the transmission of HIV can be significantly reduced by changing the sexual behaviour of the HIV "high frequency transmitter" core groups such as the female commercial sex workers.

The project was implemented by the University of Manitoba (UM) in partnership with the University of Nairobi (UN).

FUNDING

Funding for these activities has been generously provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR), National Institute of Health (NIH), The Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, among others.

CENTRE

In order to significantly extend their capabilities, the Universities of Manitoba and Nairobi constructed and equipped an International Infectious Diseases Centre (IIDC) as part of the University of Nairobi Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (UNITID). This centre is located at the University of Nairobi's College of Health Sciences, Kenyatta National Hospital Campus.

LABORATORIES

The laboratory wing housed at UNITID comprises specialized laboratories such as molecular/PCR, TB, Bacteriology, Chemistry, Serology/Immunology, Flow Cytometry and Tissue culture.

Other facilities within the institute include a biorepository facility.

(Cnt on pg 10)

Most at Risk Populations (MARPS) are those people at a higher risk of acquiring HIV compared to the general populations. They include; sex workers (SWs) and their clients, men who have sex with men (MSM), prisoners, and Injecting Drugs Users (IDU). Globally the HIV prevalence among female sex workers was 12% (UNAIDS 2011).

For over 30 (thirty) years KACP has ventured into the mysterious world of HIV/AIDS with focus on sex workers. Research activities started with the establishment of two care and treatment clinics in the Majengo and Pumwani neighborhoods of East Nairobi. When the HIV ELISA test was conducted in 1984, findings revealed that as well as carrying a number of STIs, the Nairobi sex worker cohort also had an HIV prevalence of over 65%.

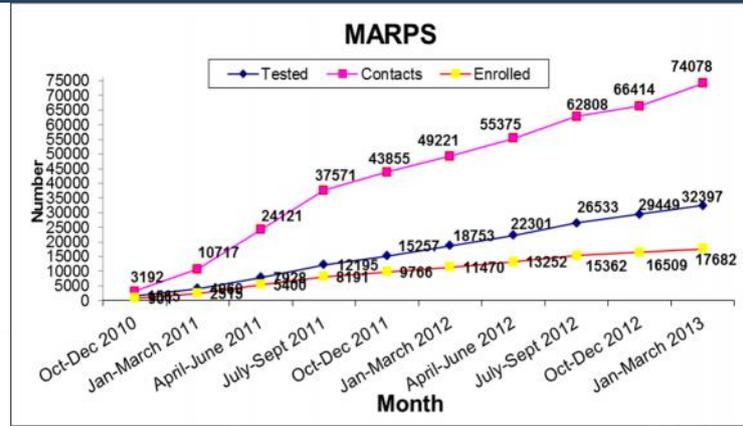
Thus the collaborative group intensified their research activities to include studies of HIV and AIDS in this population. The Nairobi collaborative group published a number of studies describing for the first time the natural history of HIV in East Africa, risk factors for acquisition, factors associated with mother-to-child transmission including the role of breast feeding, the links and interrelationships between ulcerative STIs & HIV, the first suggestions that HIV acquisition may be linked to the absence of male circumcision, and the importance of core transmitter groups such as sex workers in the initial spread of the epidemic.

In the early 1990s, the group began to report on the fact that a small but significant percentage of the sex worker population who had been followed for several years appeared to be resistant to HIV acquisition, and since then much of the research efforts of some of the group has been focused on attempting to explicate and understand this phenomenon, which seems to be true immunological resistance to infection, and not simply long-term non-progression. Learning the secrets of HIV resistance is seen as a potential key for the development of effective HIV vaccines.

Recognising that the two clinics in Majengo and Pumwani covered only a small portion of Nairobi, and were not close to some of the major "hot spots" in the city, the group expanded to two existing City Council clinics in Baba Dogo and Korogocho slums, and also opened a new clinic specifically targeting sex workers in the Central Business District (CBD).

The flagship of the Sex Worker Outreach Programme or SWOP clinic as its popularly referred to, opened its doors in August 2008 with the main aim of providing sex workers with friendly and accessible comprehensive STI/HIV care and services.

By March 31, 2013, 74,078 sex workers (female and male) have been mobilized at the SWOP Clinics.



SERVICES

KACP through SWOP clinic, offer a **minimum HIV prevention, care and treatment package for sex workers:**

- * Information on safer sex practices
- * Condom information, demonstration on use and provision.
- * HIV testing and counseling (PICT)
- * STI screening and treatment
- * Risk reduction counseling services
- * ARV and HIV basic care
- * Family planning information and provision
- * TB screening and referral
- * Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and emergency contraceptive provision
- * Psychosocial support and referral



Sex workers undergoing a training

Partners

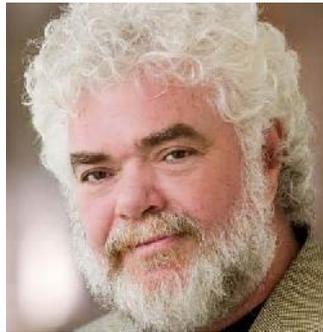
1. University of Nairobi
2. NASCOP
3. NACC
4. CDC – Kenya
5. KEMRI
6. KAVI
7. FHI360
8. University of Washington
9. JHPIEGO
10. University of Toronto

Among the organizations at the forefront in the research of HIV/AIDS in Kenya is Kenya Aids Control Project (KACP); a collaborative research group between the university of Manitoba and the University of Nairobi.

The collaboration has held a review meeting each year which initially started as a "retreat" for the various institutions involved in the collaboration to meet, report on their research activities and brainstorm ideas for future projects .

This year's annual STD/AIDS review meeting which was held at the Southern Mayfair Hotel from 21st January to 25th January, continues the organizations tradition to provide a good platform for scientists and researchers worldwide to communicate their research results and the five (5) day event saw more than 500 people attend.

According to Dr Frank Plummer, a leading HIV/AIDS researcher and specialist in infectious diseases, and also one of the organizations founder, *"the conference attracts a pool of scientists from all over the world to come and communicate their research results and it's also good for the younger researchers to showcase their work too"*



Dr Frank Plummer

The conference also allows for the researchers to compare results and engage in discussions which set up a "focus" towards tackling the issue of HIV/AIDS in Kenya and the rest of the world by identifying the key areas the researchers need to address more.

Dr. Frank Plummer.

Topics covered over the five day meeting include almost all topics in the HIV/AIDS/STI field which include; *new preventive technologies for HIV (new data, new directions), vaccine studies, epidemiology,*

transmission, risk factors, interventions, counseling and testing, treatment and care, bacterial and viral STIs, resistance and susceptibility to HIV infection and disease, perinatal transmission and HIV/AIDS in children among others

The bulk of knowledge in the field of HIV/AIDS in Africa and in particular Kenya has been generated from the research by KACP and thus major policies towards curbing the spread and infection of HIV/AIDS in the country include advocacy for measures like male circumcision, encouraging use of protection (condoms) by sex workers, treatment by ARVs among others.

Dr. Plummer further gave an insight on the imperativeness for continued research in the field of HIV/AIDS in Africa due to its dynamism over the years.

The Institutes represented in this year's retreat were: Univ. Nairobi, Univ. Manitoba, Univ. Washington, Univ. Toronto, Univ. California San Francisco, Univ. Illinois at Chicago, Univ. Ghent, Karolinska Institute, Oxford Univ., Intl Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH), Family Health International (FHI), Centres for Disease Control (CDC), Univ. British Columbia, Public Health Agency of Canada, National Microbiology Reference Laboratories (Canada), USAID, Kenya Ministry of Public Health (NASCO), Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI), Kenyatta Univ., Engender Health, Cornell Univ., Univ. Ottawa, New York Univ. Welcome Trust, Univ. North Carolina, International Livestock Research Institute ILRI, Liverpool VCT, York Univ., NY State Dept of Health, GTZ, Institute of Tropical Medicine (Antwerp), JHPIEGO



CAPTIONS

1. Visitors checking in for the conference .
2. Dr. Larry Gelmon welcomes his colleague and friend Dr Allan Ronald.
3. Prof Isaac Kibwage, Principal College of Health Sciences (UON) officiates the review meeting opening ceremony.
4. Prof. D. Bernard, President, College of Health Sciences, University of Manitoba gives a speech.
5. Audience following a presentation.
6. ALL EARS: paying attention to a presentation.
7. Dr. Blake Ball and Dr. Larry Gelmon chatting with Dr. Grace John and Dr. Carey Farquhar (Univ. Washington)



KACP-STC CASINO CLINIC PARTNERSHIP



For over thirty years, Kenya Aids Control Project (KACP) closely monitors the situation of sex workers in the country.

KACP has been working directly with sex workers through the Sex Workers Outreach Program (SWOP) commonly referred to as *swop*. They provide them first hand education and sensitization on HIV/AIDS, with the main objective of helping reducing HIV transmission and acquisition among sex workers. This is achieved by providing them a hands on experience based on peer education model-**For Sex Workers by Sex Workers**.

On the other hand, Special Treatment Centre (STC) in Nairobi or Casino Clinic as referred to as by many due to its proximity to a local casino, was one of the few public health care centers providing STI care in the city in the mid 1980's. The clinic worked together with a team of researchers from the Universities of Nairobi and Manitoba to monitor sex workers in Majengo area. STC Casino also offers STI care to people of all walks of life in the city.

Partnership.....

To further increase services to MARPS in the country, KACP has entered into a partnership with the STC Casino clinic. This move will see the two organizations provide STI and HIV care, treatment services to clients and regular sex partners of sex workers residing in Nairobi.

According to KACP's Project Director, Dr. Larry Gelmon, the partnership was imperative so as to widen its scope to the clients since most of them visit STC Casino for STI care.

KACP will also help improve the technical capacity of the Casino clinic's staff by training them further on issues to do with HIV/AIDS including care, treatment and counseling.

This will be in the context of increasing Access to Quality Comprehensive STI and HIV Prevention Services under the CDC- PEPFAR funded program whose objective is: -

"To scale-up a combination of evidence-based, cost-effective HIV prevention interventions for Most-At-Risk-Populations (MARPs) in Nairobi with the overall goal being the reduction in the number of new HIV infections in both these populations and the people with whom they come in contact".

The two organizations will work together in the collection of appropriate data, provision of apposite STI/HIV care and sharing of skills deemed necessary to address the risk of HIV infection through targeting clients and regular sex partners of sex workers residing in Nairobi. STC Casino management will provide space and dedicated staff members to ensure realization of the partnership goals. Both organizations will hold regular meetings to review progress and implement amendments to ensure the said objectives are met.



"We worked with STC Casino before, back in the 1980's. This partnership will serve to strengthen the working relationship KACP has with Casino clinic. We are looking to reach out to more clients, with the aim of getting them tested and educating them on comprehensive HIV/AIDS information."

Dr. Larry Gelmon

SWOP TEAMBUILDING

Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) had in place a team building and fun day for the sex workers, Peer Educators and Preventive Officers on the eve of Jamuhuri day.

The event organized by the Kenya Aids Control Project (KACP) was aimed at strengthening the mutual understanding and relationship between Peer Educators and their supervisors from SWOP-the Preventive Officers.

The team experienced hours of non-stop fun and team building exercises. Kicking off the day was a series of races with particularly the handicap race where a group of four people were tied together got the fun gears shifting.



There was the victorious moment where the peer educators comprehensively overcame the preventive officers in a tug of war tussle and

the highlight of the day came down to a hilarious skit on show by the KACP team on condom use and negotiation skills.

According to one of the organizers, Mrs. Gloria Gakii, the event was geared at providing a platform for relaxation and bonding after a year of intense training and education for the peer educators. "This day is all about relationship cohesion between peer educators and protection officers, a place where they can freely express themselves on any issue concerning the project whether concerns or recommendations." she elaborated.



SWOP-Our Haven



Peer Educators Training



SWOP Team presents certificates to the graduate

Recognizing the need to provide better services and educational messages to the sex workers population, the Sex Workers Outreach Programme (SWOP) held a one week Peer Educators training at the Hotel Central Park in downtown Nairobi from 11-15th March.

48 sex workers attended the five (5) day Peer Educators training. The training involved an intensive full course on all issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS and STDs and behavior change. The training was based on a Nation Peer Educators curriculum developed by NASCOP as a measure to empower sex workers with necessarily skills to work among their peers in the community



Peer Educators join Mrs Gloria in cutting of the cake



Prevention team

The Clinical Laboratory

The laboratory wing comprises specialized laboratories such as molecular/PCR, TB, Bacteriology, Chemistry, Serology/ Immunology, Flow Cytometry and Tissue culture. Other facilities within the institute include a biorepository facility. The institute also houses two **Biosafety Level 3 laboratories**. These laboratories are run through joint partnership between universities of Nairobi-Kenya, university of Manitoba, Canada and The National Microbiology of Canada. Our main goal is to provide laboratory services to support research in emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases. These include but not limited to malaria, HIV, TB and other hemorrhagic fever viruses. We also provide laboratory diagnostic services to other laboratories and hospitals.

WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

- ◆ *Support research work on emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases.*
- ◆ *Support research in clinical trials*
- ◆ *Support research in molecular biology, immunology and microbiology.*
- ◆ *Provide diagnosis services in areas such as TB diagnosis by genexpert, HIV viral load, HIV drug resistance testing and screening of Human Papillomavirus (HPV).*
- ◆ *Provide bio-repository services for storage of biological specimens.*



Good Clinical Laboratory Practices (GCLP) Training 2013



Good Clinical Laboratory Practices (GCLP) outline the quality system principles and procedures to be followed by medical laboratories involved in patient care and/or clinical research so as to provide:

- ◆ *consistent,*
- ◆ *reproducible,*
- ◆ *auditable, and*
- ◆ *reliable laboratory results.*

The institute is keen in improving staff capacity of through training such as GCLP. Consequently, GCLP training was organised for the laboratory staff in April, 2013. Two technicians from Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM), Belgium arrived in Nairobi on April 7, 2013 to train our technicians on GCLP as part of preparation for the SCOPE/FHI study. The training started on April 8, 2013 and ended on April 10, 2013. Four of our technicians [Jane Mungai, Wendy Adhiambo, Peter Muthoga and Jemima Nyakio] and two technicians from Eldoret completed the three day training.