



**British Columbia
Centre for Excellence
In HIV/AIDS**

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The British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE) is Canada's largest HIV/AIDS research, treatment and education facility. When the BC-CfE opened in 1992, a British Columbian was dying from AIDS almost every day. Today, advances in HIV treatment and prevention – many of them developed by the BC-CfE – have made HIV infection preventable and transformed HIV disease a chronic, manageable illness.

However, much work remains to be done. Drug resistance, adverse reactions to medication, and barriers to accessing treatment are just a few of many issues facing HIV-positive individuals. The BC-CfE is internationally recognized as a leader in developing innovative, life-saving HIV and AIDS therapies to improve the health of people living with HIV and prevent infections. The inter-professional team of researchers conducts clinical, laboratory, epidemiological, and behavioural research in Canada and around the world.

The BC-CfE is based at St Paul's Hospital, Providence Health Care and the University of British Columbia, and is funded by the B.C. Ministry of Health Services. The BC-CfE attracts peer-reviewed research funding from numerous agencies, including B.C.'s Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the U.S. National Institutes of Health. The BC-CfE also receives support from donors, private partners and the pharmaceutical industry.

Core Programs and Initiatives

Laboratory Program: The BC-CfE conducts translational HIV research and coordinates some of the world's largest cohort studies examining human and virus variability.

Epidemiology and Population Health: This comprehensive program identifies risks for HIV infection while tracking access to antiretroviral therapy and clinical outcomes among vulnerable populations.

Drug Treatment Program (DTP): As of December 31, 2009, the program has distributed free anti-HIV medications to more than 9,344 eligible HIV-infected individuals in B.C. The program distributes anti-HIV drugs based on guidelines generated by the BC-CfE's Therapeutic Guidelines Committee.

Clinical Research: The BC-CfE conducts research within the context of clinical care at the Providence Health Care Immunodeficiency Clinic and St. Paul's Hospital's 10C-HIV/AIDS Ward. The research helps set provincial HIV/AIDS therapeutic guidelines.

Clinical Education and Training: The BC-CfE provides HIV/AIDS training to national and international professionals through academic courses and events, on-site training, and physician preceptorship.

Addiction and Urban Health Research Initiative: The BC-CfE conducts population-based research on HIV/AIDS and related diseases among urban populations and those suffering addiction. Funded cohort studies involve drug users, street-involved youth and health services evaluation studies.

Gender and Sexual Health Initiative: A newly launched BC-CfE initiative that highlights the critical need to address issues of gender and sexual health in the response to HIV.

International Centre for Science in Drug Policy (ICSDP) Initiative: The BC-CfE's Addiction and Urban Health Research Initiative serves as the Secretariat for the ICSDP. Founded by BC-CfE scientists in 2010, the ICSDP brings together international experts to produce evidence-based policy statements in the field of illicit drug policy.

Seek and Treat for Optimal Prevention of HIV and AIDS (STOP HIV and AIDS) Pilot Project: The B.C. government's \$48-million Seek and Treat pilot project will expand access to highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) to vulnerable populations in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and Prince George. Pioneered by the BC-CfE, the groundbreaking Seek and Treat strategy is now recognized worldwide as an effective approach to combat HIV and AIDS in vulnerable populations and reduce the incidence of HIV transmission in the community.

Major HIV and AIDS Advances Led by the BC-CfE

Over the past 20 years, the BC-CfE has pioneered life-saving innovations, proposed break-through strategies and campaigned for HIV and AIDS issues. As a result of the BC-CfE's many achievements, HIV-positive people who are appropriately treated can now expect to live decades of healthy, productive life.

1992-2000

- Provincial HIV/AIDS therapeutic guidelines introduced
- HIV/AIDS nursing course established at University of British Columbia School of Nursing
- BC-CfE unveils results of the comprehensive INCAS (Italy, Netherlands, Canada, Australia) trial, demonstrating HAART's remarkable suppression of HIV
- Viral load testing is introduced to monitor disease progression and response to HAART
- Multiple Drug Rescue Therapy is developed for individuals failing conventional therapies
- BC-CfE introduces Canada's first clinical drug-resistance monitoring program

2000-2006

- Canada's first application of therapeutic drug monitoring for patients on antiretroviral therapy
- BC-CfE performs scientific evaluation of Insite, North America's first supervised safe injection facility
- B.C. is first to implement routine therapeutic drug monitoring for all patients on antiretroviral therapy
- John Ruedy Immunodeficiency Clinic at St. Paul's Hospital reopens as a primary and specialty clinic for HIV-positive individuals, introducing a new model of care based on chronic disease management
- BC-CfE pioneers the use of the Biojector, a needle-free injection device for enfuvirtide
- Research laboratory demonstrates effects of human and virus genetic variation on response to HAART
- Pioneers the use of TMC114 and TMC125 as a life-saving treatment for patients who have exhausted all conventional options for HAART
- BC-CfE publishes a major paper in *The Lancet* introducing the concept of treatment as prevention, a bold new strategy for controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic
- Dr. Julio Montaner elected President of the International AIDS Society for the term 2008-2010

2007-Today

- Human leukocyte antigen testing predicts life-threatening abacavir hypersensitivity reactions
- Dr. Montaner receives \$2.5 million Avant Garde Award from the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse to further develop the proposed expansion of HAART, known as STOP HIV/AIDS
- BC-CfE's proposed expansion of HAART is endorsed by Stephen Lewis, Bill Clinton, the World Health Organization, UNAIDS, and *The Economist*
- BC Premier Gordon Campbell commits to support STOP HIV/AIDS as a pilot project to expand access to HIV/AIDS drugs among marginalized populations in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and Prince George
- B.C. announces \$48 million for the STOP HIV/AIDS pilot project under the leadership of the BC-CfE

Leadership

The BC-CfE is headed by director Dr. Julio Montaner, a world-renowned researcher and a respected leader on HIV/AIDS issues and advocacy. Throughout his career, Dr. Montaner has called upon Canadian and foreign governments to step up their efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS. He is also the President of the International AIDS Society, the world's leading independent association of HIV professionals.

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