



Left to right: Jim Nickel, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Canada, China; BC-CfE Director of Operations, Irene Day; BC-CfE Senior Research Scientist, Dr. Jeffrey Joy; BC-CfE Senior Statistician, Dr. Viviane Dias Lima; BC-CfE Director, Dr. Julio Montaner; and Dr. Zunyou Wu, Chief Epidemiologist, China Centre for Disease Control (China CDC) & Director of Division of HIV Prevention, NCAIDS/China CDC

China CDC and BC-CfE renewed partnership reaffirms commitment to fight HIV

China is facing an HIV epidemic that is on the scale of its population of approximately 1.4 billion. The BC-CfE is providing valuable insights on successful tactics, programs and strategies implemented in British Columbia to curb HIV. Namely, the BC-CfE's **Treatment as Prevention® (TasP®)** strategy has transformed the province from the one with the highest number of new HIV diagnoses to one of the lowest (despite being one of the most populous provinces).

On October 29th, delegates from the BC-CfE traveled to Beijing to meet with members of the National Centre for AIDS/STD Control/Prevention and Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCAIDS/China CDC) and renewed their partnership to address HIV and AIDS. The BC-CfE and NCAIDS/China CDC signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on health priorities affecting China and British Columbia in relation to HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C virus (HCV).

"China will continue to use the best science and evidence from around the world and implement strategies that have a real impact on curbing the transmission of HIV and AIDS," said Dr. Zunyou Wu, Chief Epidemiologist China CDC and Director of Division of HIV Prevention, NCAIDS/China CDC.

"For people to be able to participate fully in the labour force and to proactively participate in their communities, health is a very important thing," said Jim Nickel, Deputy Head of Mission, China, with Global Affairs Canada who spoke at the October MOU signing in Beijing. Mr. Nickel said the work by China and Canada is important for sustainable development.

The collaboration between BC and China began in 2009 and China was the first nation to formally announce its adoption of the BC-CfE-pioneered **TasP®** strategy in 2011. This was followed by the signing of the first MOU between the BC-CfE and China in 2013.

Since then, the BC-CfE and China have collaborated in adapting the **TasP®** strategy developed in British Columbia to be applicable in China—with promising results. China embedded the **TasP®** strategy into their national HIV/AIDS policy, and has seen large-scale increases in HIV testing with 200 million HIV tests performed in 2017 alone. This effort has been accompanied by the immediate offer of antiretroviral treatment (ART) to people living with HIV, with 610,000 people living with HIV in China covered by ART in 2017. In 2017 alone, 131,000 people living with HIV in China were newly enrolled on ART.

For several successive years, new HIV diagnoses have increased in China, attributable to increased access to testing. Prior to access to testing, individuals may have been unaware they were living with HIV for a number of years. China is committed to expanding the number of individuals accessing testing and treatment in order to attain the 90-90-90 Target of 90% of people living with HIV diagnosed, 90% of those diagnosed on treatment, and 90% of those on treatment virally suppressed.

The China and BC-CfE MOU renews a three-year fellowship program bringing three of among China's top scientists to Vancouver to collaborate with researchers and clinicians at the BC-CfE.

"Our partnership with Dr. Zunyou Wu and his colleagues is based on mutual trust and collaboration and a deep

commitment to ending HIV/AIDS using evidence-based research and strategies known to be effective in the fight against HIV/AIDS, such as **TasP®**," says Dr. Julio Montaner, Director of the BC-CfE. "We will continue to work jointly, as we have for several years now, to improve the health of British Columbians and Chinese citizens. We can collaborate to advance strategies like **TasP®**—and the various initiatives that have evolved from this approach—in order to reduce new cases of HIV."

As the Chinese government continues to make a serious domestic commitment to funding HIV treatment and prevention efforts, NCAIDS/China CDC is tasked with ensuring the scale up of these efforts are cost-effective and reach across demographic groups. Principles of **TasP®** are also being applied to addressing reinfection in the hepatitis C epidemic, another bloodborne pathogen that can now be effectively cured with access to the latest generation of treatments or DAAs (direct acting antivirals).

The BC-CfE has consistently developed programs to connect hard-to-reach populations to HIV care and treatment—and is applying the strategy to addressing hepatitis C reinfection as well as the spread of other communicable and socially communicable diseases.

Investing in reducing the burden of new infections has enormous long-term benefits. The made-in-BC **TasP®** strategy has been shown to be not only cost-effective, but also cost-saving. Through collaboration with colleagues in China, the BC-CfE will ensure the lessons learned in BC will help guide the NCAIDS/China CDC in curbing the spread of HIV and hepatitis C, including the use of some of the most cutting-edge science such as phylogenetics.

» "Our vision is to see a world without HIV/AIDS and HCV. The BC-CfE has been at the forefront of tackling both these diseases with innovative, targeted and sustained approaches that have worked in British Columbia."

— Dr. Zunyou Wu, Chief Epidemiologist China CDC and
Director of Division of HIV Prevention, NCAIDS/China CDC



World AIDS Day campaign calls on British Columbians to know their status

December 1st marks the 30th anniversary of World AIDS Day. The BC-CfE launched an awareness campaign called #KnowYourStatusBC, calling on individuals to get tested, to know their status and to better understand HIV. This year, we are celebrating medical advances while acknowledging the HIV epidemic continues to affect thousands in Canada, with about 2,000 new cases seen annually.

We need to stay steadfast. The arc of scientific progress on HIV is perhaps the biggest medical breakthrough of our time. Still, there are many people worldwide who are unaware they are living with HIV, including 14% of Canadians with the disease. Stigma and misconceptions can hinder access to testing and treatment.

On HIV treatment, a person can live a longer, healthier life. BC-CfE Director Dr. Julio Montaner was instrumental in the development of the gold standard in HIV treatment, HAART. He also pioneered the proven effective **Treatment as Prevention® (TasP®)** strategy, expanding access to testing and providing immediate, universal access to HIV treatment upon diagnosis.

HIV has changed. Recent groundbreaking studies have supported the Undetectable Equals Untransmittable movement, which is founded on principles of **TasP®**. The movement raises awareness there is zero risk of HIV transmission when a person is on sustained, consistent antiretroviral treatment and has achieved an undetectable viral load.

Another key component to the implementation of **TasP®**: Women living with HIV who are on effective treatment cannot transmit the virus through pregnancy. "In BC today, we are happy to celebrate the fact that we have no children being born with HIV for close to a couple of decades," said BC-CfE Director Dr. Julio Montaner.

Unfortunately, public perception has not always caught up to the science on HIV. For our World AIDS Day #KnowYourStatusBC campaign, the BC-CfE spoke with long-term survivors about living with HIV. Unfortunately, complacency and apathy around the disease are contributing to misconceptions. HIV Peer Navigator Hesham Ali says he encounters long-standing myths about how the disease can be transmitted: untruths like that you can get HIV from sharing a washroom or living in the same house.

According to Denise Wozniak, Vice Chairperson with Positive Living BC, stigma experienced by women living with HIV can keep them from accessing care and other services. They may be hesitant to leave relationships because of their status, even if they are facing abuse.

To curb the spread of this epidemic and achieve an AIDS-free generation, we need more awareness and understanding about HIV. "I keep hearing that HIV is over and it's not," said BC-CfE Senior Research Scientist Dr. Robert Hogg. "Everyone should get tested."

See the videos for the campaign on our website: http://bit.ly/BCCfE_WAD2018.

EDUCATION

Training to improve HIV care



Since its launch in 2011, the BC-CfE's highly regarded Education and Training program has engaged over 13,500 participants in educational programs and events. Of those, over 11,000 participated lecture events, over 1,400 took online courses and over 580 attended clinical training programs.

"The BC-CfE clinical education program aims to diminish barriers to continuing education on HIV care and prevention for health care providers and the community at large, including those who may be in underserved or remote areas," said Dr. Silvia Guillemi, Director of the BC-CfE Education and Training Program.

In October, Dr. Guillemi received the UBC Faculty of Medicine Award for Innovation in Continuing Professional Development/Continuing Medical Education. The honour recognized that Dr. Guillemi and her team had implemented "unique and innovative opportunities for training and education in the field of HIV/AIDS in BC."

To offer learners the most up-to-date content, the award-winning education programming often corresponds with the latest HIV care initiatives, highlighting new research from BC, Canada and abroad. The most recently launched training program will provide nurse practitioners in BC with the knowledge required to prescribe and monitor post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for people at risk of acquiring HIV. This program was developed to facilitate access to HIV prevention medications (tenofovir/emtricitabine) that have been publicly available to eligible individuals in BC since January of this year.

The BC-CfE's Education and Training programs reach individuals in multiple professional roles—from health care providers to researchers to community workers and people living with HIV. They are accessed from within all of BC's Health Authorities, as well as nationally and internationally. Reaching thousands with training

programs for HIV prevention and care in British Columbia is key to improving access to the successful **Treatment as Prevention® (TasP®)** strategy.

Most of the programming aims to be globally accessible through online courses and online video access to lectures. Offline, the BC-CfE's Intensive Preceptorship Program is a postgraduate program for family physicians and nurse practitioners that provides more hands-on, specialized clinical training. There is also a three-month-long UBC Enhanced Skills in HIV/AIDS residency program for family physicians.

The preceptorship consists of an online component followed by clinical placements at HIV clinics and other associated sites. Trainees also participate in a series of tutorial lunch sessions focused on key issues related to the care of people living with HIV and their individualized learning objectives. Once the clinical placement is completed the trainees will access the ongoing mentorship. Feedback on the intensive preceptorship has been positive; trainees have expressed that it has increased confidence when caring for people living with HIV and provides accessible, quality education.

Recently, the BC-CfE hosted a delegation of family physicians from Saskatchewan—Drs. Sarafa Tijani, Natasha McNamara, and Laura Marshall—for the week-long preceptorship. Their visit was arranged by the Saskatchewan Infectious Disease Care Network. In addition to increasing HIV prevention and care knowledge, the program highlighted how interprofessional teams could provide HIV care that addresses issues related to social determinants of health and harm reduction.

"It gave me lots of things to take back to my practice and my community," said Dr. McNamara.

Check the website to find out more: http://bit.ly/BCCfE_education.

EVENT

BC-CfE Director Dr. Julio Montaner joins global experts in Argentina



BC-CfE Director Dr. Julio Montaner and Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the US National Institute on Drug Abuse

In November, BC-CfE Director Dr. Julio Montaner joined Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the US National Institute on Drug Abuse, at an international conference in Buenos Aires at the Universidad del Salvador. Prominent global health experts addressed high-burden epidemics, including HIV & substance use disorders. Dr. Montaner shared lessons from BC's implementation of **Treatment as Prevention®** to curb HIV.

LECTURES & EVENTS

Forefront Lecture

Sex, Equity & Resistance: A Journey of Women Loving and Living with HIV from the CHIWOS Study

Speakers: Dr. Angela Kaida and Valerie Nicholson

Tuesday, December 4, 2018, 12–1PM

Cullen Lecture Hall, Providence Level 1, St. Paul's Hospital

HIV Care Rounds

Optimizing Antiretroviral Therapy: Why and When to Switch ART

Speaker: Dr. Silvia Guillemi

Wednesday, December 12, 2018, 12–1PM

Conference Room 6, Providence Level 1, St. Paul's Hospital

For more information, contact us at Education@cfenet.ubc.ca or visit our website at www.education.cfenet.ubc.ca

BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

- > Improve the health of British Columbians with HIV through comprehensive research and treatment programs;
- > Develop cost-effective research and therapeutic protocols;
- > Provide educational support programs to health-care professionals;
- > Monitor the impact of HIV/AIDS on B.C. and conduct analyses of the effectiveness of HIV-related programs.

Physician Drug Hotline
1.800.665.7677

St. Paul's Hospital Pharmacy Hotline
1.888.511.6222

Website
www.cfenet.ubc.ca

E-mail
info@cfenet.ubc.ca

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