

Highlights of Selected US and International Groups Providing HIV Care and Services in Developing Countries

In recent months, the International AIDS Society–USA (IAS–USA) has seen growing clinician interest in efforts by organizations in developed countries to assist HIV-infected patients in the developing world. Audience questions posed at IAS–USA continuing medical education courses, for example, increasingly seek information about US- or international-led groups working through clinical care, physician training, patient education, or other means to address the epidemic worldwide. Profiles of 8 such organizations, collected through an IAS–USA survey sent to 18 groups, are provided below in alphabetical order. Included is information on how individual practitioners might contribute time or resources to each group’s activities.

These 8 organizations primarily focus their efforts in Africa. Services are also provided in Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, but less frequently. On the whole, the groups focus their efforts in developing countries on medical training of local

health care practitioners; community education about strategies to prevent HIV transmission, particularly mother-to-child transmission; and care for HIV-seropositive patients, including counseling, prophylaxis and treatment of opportunistic infections, and related services. For several organizations, such care increasingly includes antiretroviral therapy, offered to select patients. At least 2 groups are also conducting organized research into effective methods to provide antiretroviral drugs within resource-limited settings.

The IAS–USA does not endorse the groups included in this article, and information provided comes directly from the organizations. Further, this compilation by no means exhausts the list of organizations working in this sphere, and readers are welcome to submit suggestions for additional profiles, which may be included in a future issue of *Topics in HIV Medicine*. Suggestions may be e-mailed to topics@iasusa.org.

Academic Alliance for AIDS Care and Prevention

A joint effort by US and Ugandan physicians to provide enhanced care, educate clinicians, and conduct research

Overview

The Academic Alliance for AIDS Care and Prevention is led by a group of physicians from the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and the Kampala, Uganda-based Makerere University. The project began in June 2001 with an initial grant from Pfizer Inc. for the construction of the Infectious Diseases Institute, an HIV clinic, in Kampala. The alliance is primarily academic in nature, integrated fully into Makerere University Medical School and Kampala’s Mulago Hospital. It is also a non-governmental organization with private-public partnerships, through which it receives additional funding from many donors. The project targets adults and children in Kampala and has outreach efforts throughout Uganda. Primary goals of the project include:

- Provide enhanced care, including antiretroviral drugs and prophylaxis and treatment of opportunistic infections, to HIV-infected patients
- Train African medical practitioners in HIV care through an intensive educational program linked with the IDSA
- Conduct operational and outcomes research to create better guidelines for the care of HIV-infected patients in Africa

- Conduct prevention-based research, focusing on voluntary testing and counseling, reducing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and reducing the spread of other sexually transmitted diseases
- Implement state-of-the-art laboratory techniques appropriate for the initiation and monitoring of antiretroviral therapy in resource-limited settings

Volunteer Opportunities

Physicians may volunteer through the Academic Alliance to help train African physicians in HIV care. Volunteers must be willing to live in Uganda and serve as trainers for at least 2 years. Round-trip airfare to Kampala, onsite housing, and a per diem for living expenses are provided to volunteers. Further information about the training program and an application form are available through the IDSA Web site at www.idsociety.org/ATP/Background.htm.

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AIDS Empowerment and Treatment International

An international network of associations of people living with HIV/AIDS

Overview

AIDS Empowerment and Treatment International (AIDSETI) is an international network of 22 associations of people living with HIV/AIDS in 14 African and Caribbean countries. Incorporated in Uganda and in Delaware as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, AIDSETI aims in the next several years to implement a cross-country program to test the scalability, quality, and cost-effectiveness of an association-based treatment model for HIV. Through this model, all financial, pharmaceutical, and human resources are controlled by local associations. AIDSETI is led by an independent board of 13 directors, the majority of whom are from developing countries. It also maintains a small administrative staff, based in Washington, DC, whose responsibilities include network management and information dissemination. Once the network is fully operational, services provided to HIV/AIDS patients by AIDSETI associations will include the following:

- Psychosocial and nutritional support
- Education on healthy living and survival skills
- Monitoring of disease progression

- Prophylaxis and treatment of opportunistic infections
- Antiretroviral drugs for patients in more advanced stages of disease

AIDSETI will also help conduct operational research to improve referral systems, carry out clinical trials to adapt treatment to resource-poor settings, and ultimately make available a researchable cross-country treatment database. AIDSETI is seeking funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to cover the majority of costs over the first 3 years of implementation. The network also expects to receive contributions from associations, patients, and other corporate or organizational donors.

Volunteer Opportunities

A printable form on AIDSETI's Web site allows individuals to propose volunteer opportunities or make financial donations. The form is available at www.aidseti.org/ReturnForm1.htm.

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Global AIDS Interfaith Alliance

Web: www.idsociety.org/ATP/Background.htm
Using religious organizations in Africa to help those in rural areas develop HIV prevention and care strategies

Overview

The Global AIDS Interfaith Alliance (GAIA) works through religious organizations in rural Africa to develop village-level action plans for HIV prevention and care. GAIA uses Christian, Muslim, and traditional African religious organizations in its efforts, which are funded through gifts from individuals, foundations, and religious congregations in the developed world. The non-governmental organization trains rural residents to deliver home-based care, health counseling, pastoral counseling, and support services, as well as to make referrals to testing, diagnostic, and treatment centers if available. In addition, GAIA provides small grants to purchase bicycle ambulances, HIV testing kits, blankets, food, and other supplies.

Volunteer Opportunities

Although GAIA does not formally sponsor the work of health care practitioners from developed countries in the developing world, it can refer volunteers to care facilities in those areas. The group has helped one US-based HIV testing, treatment, and counseling center partner with a rural clinic in Central Africa and would be interested in helping other organizations create similar affiliations.

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Global Strategies for HIV Prevention

Educational efforts to stem HIV transmission in developing countries

Overview

Global Strategies for HIV Prevention is a US-based, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that works to prevent HIV transmission in resource-poor areas of developing countries. The organization's goals include the following:

- Facilitate community programs to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission
- Sponsor focused workshops and conferences in developing countries on issues relevant to preventing HIV transmission
- Establish programs to prevent HIV infection in women and children who are sexually abused
- Establish prevention programs for health care workers caring for HIV-seropositive patients
- Create mentoring relationships between medical advisors in developed countries and health care workers in developing countries
- Develop and distribute, via all available communication means, HIV information to communities with limited access to educational material

The organization's educational efforts include a CD-ROM entitled "Women, Children and HIV," developed in collaboration

with the University of California San Francisco's HIV InSite program. The CD-ROM contains the equivalent of 5000 printed pages of information on categories such as counseling and testing, care of women and children with HIV, prevention, and nutrition. The first edition was distributed to 2000 individuals in 52 countries. The second edition, currently in development, will be distributed to 15,000 individuals and organizations worldwide.

Global Strategies also provides nevirapine to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission; rapid HIV tests; and antibiotics to treat opportunistic infections. The organization, which is funded through individuals, corporations, foundations, and other grants, has supported programs in more than 20 countries.

Volunteer Opportunities

Global Strategies does not use volunteer physicians to serve patients in the developing world directly. However, volunteers may contribute education, training, and resource information for the educational CD-ROM described above. The organization also welcomes volunteer editors to help confirm the accuracy of such information.

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International Center for Equal Healthcare Access

Volunteer physicians provide health practitioner training in community-based care settings in order to enhance clinical care provided to HIV-infected patients

Overview

The International Center for Equal Healthcare Access (ICEHA) is a US-based, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that represents a network of clinicians from various US medical facilities who donate their time toward improving the quality and expanding the capacity of community-based HIV/AIDS care in developing countries. The organization targets countries where access to antiretroviral drugs is growing. Services provided by ICEHA include medical education and hands-on training for community-based care providers; HIV health literacy and empowerment programs to raise awareness at the village level; and home-based care.

As of November 2002, ICEHA oversaw projects in the following areas:

- *Northern Vietnam:* A medical education and practical training program targets all health care practitioners in Langson province (northern highlands and Chinese border area) in an effort to slow the spread of HIV in the region; if successful, the program may expand nationwide.
- *Côte d'Ivoire:* Medical education is offered to community-based practitioners in the city of Abidjan, who serve roughly 4500 HIV-seropositive patients in a general population of 35,000. An HIV health literacy and health care empowerment program targets 20,000 people in 10 villages in the Bas-Sassandra region.
- *Nigeria:* A program at the rural Ogun-State antenatal clinic to prevent vertical HIV transmission draws on existing antiretroviral services and will serve approximately 3000 pregnant women over a 2-year period.

As of November 2002, ICEHA was considering an additional 5 program proposals. Most projects are scheduled to run 12 to 15

months, although duration varies according to need. ICEHA projects are funded through various sources, including foundations and corporate support.

Volunteer Opportunities

ICEHA is a network of clinicians who donate their time. Current participants practice in the fields of infectious diseases, internal medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics, among others. Experience levels range from chief residents and fellows to senior-level clinical experts. Medical volunteers work in local clinics, where they provide care while working to train local practitioners by example. A minimum time commitment of 8 weeks is required. Expenses incurred when participating in ICEHA pro-

grams may be covered, although reimbursement varies between projects.

Physicians unable to contribute their time may assist ICEHA through financial contributions, distribution of printed materials, and fundraising.

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Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders

Offering HIV prevention, counseling, testing, and antiretroviral treatment through projects worldwide

Overview

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is an international medical aid network that, among its many projects, serves HIV/AIDS patients in developing countries. The organization offers HIV prevention services, especially related to mother-to-child transmission; voluntary counseling and testing; psychosocial support; and prophylaxis and treatment of opportunistic infections. Since 2001, MSF has also provided antiretroviral drugs to HIV-infected patients in Cambodia, Cameroon, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Thailand, Uganda, and Ukraine. As of December 2002, these programs served almost 2300 patients; in 2003, MSF expects to double the number of countries and patients to which it provides antiretroviral therapy. MSF is a private, not-for-profit organization that receives funding from the public, foundations, corporations, not-for-profit organizations, governments, and international agencies.

Volunteer Opportunities

Approximately 2500 volunteers a year, including physicians, nurses, and other medical personnel, participate in MSF projects around the world. The minimum commitment for a first-time volunteer is 6 months, and commitments of 9 to 12 months are more typical. Volunteer applicants must undergo an in-person interview at an MSF office. Foreign language skills and prior experience in developing or underserved regions are valued.

Volunteer responsibilities vary according to project but generally include a combination of treatment and education.

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MTCT-Plus Initiative

Adding care and treatment to existing programs to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV

Overview

Coordinated by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, the MTCT-Plus Initiative aims to add HIV care and treatment to existing programs to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV in developing countries. The project, which launched in December 2001, has identified 12 prevention programs in 8 countries (7 in Africa and 1 in Thailand). Beginning in early 2003, pregnant women enrolled in these programs will be offered a post-delivery package of care and treatment services, including education, counseling, prophylaxis and treatment of HIV complications, and antiretroviral therapy where appropriate. Services are offered to women on a lifetime basis, and are also offered to their HIV-seropositive partners and

children. The MTCT-Plus Initiative is supported by a coalition of 9 US-based foundations.

Volunteer Opportunities

MTCT-Plus does not currently use physician volunteers from developed countries, although it may do so in the future.

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Pangaea Global AIDS Foundation

Working to broaden access to antiretroviral therapy and to support development of an effective HIV vaccine

Overview

The Pangaea Global AIDS Foundation is a US-based affiliate of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. Launched in May 2000, the nongovernmental organization works in developing countries to broaden access to antiretroviral therapy and other HIV care and to support the development of an effective HIV vaccine. Funding for its efforts comes from private foundations, corporations, individual donors, and the governments of developed countries. Pangaea has projects in Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, and the Bahamas, where it works in partnership with local medical, academic, and civic organizations to create programs that are sustainable for the long term; culturally relevant and sensitive; locally controlled; and supported by strong management systems, among other considerations. Pangaea's efforts in these 4 countries are described below.

- *Rwanda:* Pangaea's Family HIV Care and Support Project, a joint initiative with the country's Ministry of Health and Office of the First Lady, works with clinics and a hospital in Kigali to provide antiretroviral drugs to HIV-seropositive women and their partners and children.
- *South Africa:* The organization has partnered with hospitals, university medical institutions, and community clinics in the provinces of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Gauteng, and the Western Cape to develop, test, and implement different models of care that include access to antiretroviral drugs.

- *Uganda:* Pangaea has collaborated with Pfizer Inc. and the Academic Alliance for AIDS Care and Prevention in Africa (see above) to create an HIV clinical care and training institute in Kampala. Pangaea is the fiscal agent on an \$11 million grant provided by Pfizer for clinic construction.
- *Bahamas:* In partnership with the William Jefferson Clinton Foundation, Pangaea has performed an assessment of the Bahamas' capacity to provide HIV care and developed a plan to provide treatment, including antiretroviral drugs, to local patients beginning in 2003.

Volunteer Opportunities

Pangaea does not currently use physician volunteers from developed countries, although it may do so in the future. Individual physicians can contribute to the organization's efforts by advocating for funding, providing contacts, and assisting in resource solicitation.

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Editors: Michael S. Saag, MD, Editor in Chief; Meg D. Newman, MD, Co-Editor

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