



News briefs

The next CTN semi-annual meetings will be held at the Loews Hotel Vogue in Montreal from April 16-19.

Mark January 16 as the abstract submission deadline for the annual conference of the Canadian Association for HIV Research (CAHR, April 19-22) to be held at the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal. Networkers involved in the conference include Drs. Jean-Pierre Routy and Pierre Côté [co-chairs], Richard Lalonde [Clinical Sciences Track co-chair], Nitika Pant Pai [Epidemiology and Public Health Sciences Track co-chair], Jonathan Angel [CAHR president], and Brian Conway [sponsorship coordinator]. As part of the conference, the CTN will be hosting its annual Postdoctoral Fellows Breakfast Symposium on Saturday, April 21. For more info, go to www.cahr-conference-acrv.ca/.

19th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) 2012 will take place from March 5-8 at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle, Washington. For more info, go to www.retroconference.org/.

The next submission deadline for CTN trial pre-final and final proposals is January 27. Related documents may be found at www.hivnet.ubc.ca under Research Services.



CIHR IRSC

The CIHR Canadian HIV Trials Network is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and sponsored by the University of British Columbia and St. Paul's Hospital (Providence Health Care).

New study on women-specific HIV health services

Little research has been done on women's health issues in HIV, despite increasing numbers of HIV-positive women globally and within Canada



Dr. Mona Loutfy, principal investigator, and Shari Margolese, peer research coordinator, for the CHIWOS study.

HIV affects everyone, yet it's clear that women's experiences with HIV are unique. There are significant differences that stem from biology, socially constructed gender differences, and from economic and social conditions such as income, education and housing among many.

Funded by CIHR and affiliated with the Canadian Observational Cohort (CANOC, CTN 242) collaboration, CTN 262 – Canadian HIV Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Cohort Study (CHIWOS) is a multi-site, community-collaboration that seeks to address this gap in Canada.

"It will bring community members, researchers and service-providers together to learn from HIV-positive women about the challenges we face in accessing care," says Shari Margolese, the study's peer research coordinator and member of CTN's Community Advisory Committee.

Led by Drs. Mona Loutfy of the Women's College Hospital in Toronto, Robert Hogg from the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, Angela Kaida of Simon Fraser University and Alexandra de Pokomandy of the Montreal Chest Institute, CHIWOS brings together 29 co-investigators and 25 community collaborators to assess health service disparities for women living with HIV.

"HIV-positive women in Canada are not a homogenous group," says Dr. Mona Loutfy. Prevalence in BC is highest among Aboriginal women, women who inject drugs, and female sex workers. In Quebec and Ontario, it is highest among women in the African and Caribbean communities. She says this underscores the need to understand and address how systems of racism, colonial legacies, homophobia, classism, and sexism increase vulnerability to HIV and impact health care for women living with HIV.

Enrolling in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec (with plans to expand), CHIWOS will begin recruiting positive women aged 16 years and older in March 2012.

Switching it up for a liver-friendly treatment

For people living with both HIV and hepatitis C, newer strategies are needed to reduce liver fibrosis, cirrhosis, and liver disease

"Research has led to many advancements in treating HIV but we haven't slowed the progression of hepatitis C very well," says Dr. Klein, principal investigator on CTN 260 — Raltegravir switch study. "We need some other ways of slowing and managing liver fibrosis."

Klein wants to find out if changing HIV treatment can slow the rate of fibrosis or excess tissue scarring of the liver. The study builds on preliminary findings of CTN 222 — the Canadian co-infection cohort which has over one thousand enrolled.

"It's an important first study out of CTN 222. We have HCV treatment options, but a lot of people who are co-infected can't tolerate those treatments because they're toxic, or they've already tried those treatments and they haven't worked for them," says Klein.

The study will evaluate the safety and feasibility of switching from a ritonavir boosted PI-based therapy to raltegravir in co-infected persons with significant liver fibrosis. Using a special non-invasive and low-risk ultrasound called the Fibroscan, the researchers will measure changes in liver stiffness. The study will begin in January and will be enrolling 40 patients from four sites across Canada.



Dr. Marina Klein, Principal Investigator for CTN 260, at her clinic at the Montreal Chest Institute.

Trials to watch

Our Pilot Study Funding Opportunity provides funding for small-scale investigations that attempt to determine if larger randomized studies are feasible.

CTNPT 011 – Monitoring penicillin levels for syphilis

Dr. Paul MacPherson [Ottawa Hospital General Campus]. Enrolment is expected to commence soon for sites in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. CTNPT 011 will determine what penicillin dosages are appropriate for treating syphilis, as well as examine how the standard syphilis treatment is affected by HIV co-infection.

CTNPT 006 – The Niaspan® Study

Dr. Bertrand Lebouché [Montreal Chest Institute]. After some final administrative duties, Dr. Lebouché and his team plan to enroll their first patient in December 2011, and the last in December 2013. This trial will assess the effect of an extended-release form of niacin, a drug called Niaspan®, on those who are living with HIV and are on antiretroviral therapy. CTNPT 006 will test the hypothesis that by regulating the amino acid tryptophan, niacin could decrease T cell immune activation, which could, in turn, improve neurocognitive function and enhance CD4 recovery.

CTNPT 001 – Fracture case-control study in HIV

Dr. Darrell Tan [St. Michael's Hospital]. Enrolment has begun at St. Michael's Hospital and Toronto General Hospital, with 14 participants enrolled thus far. Target enrolment is 72 and potential participants are showing lots of interest in the study. CTNPT 001 will compare results of novel bone imaging techniques and soluble markers between HIV-infected adults with a history of fracture to those among age-, sex-, smoking status- and race-matched HIV-infected controls without a history of fracture.

Networks

Seeking CAC nominations

CTN's Community Advisory Committee (CAC) seeks nominations to fill three positions and one apprentice position. Nominations from under-represented communities are encouraged. Please send a letter of interest, resumé, and a nomination letter from a community group by February 10, 2012 to reception@hivnet.ubc.ca.

More info at www.hivnet.ubc.ca.

Postdoc focus: Dr. Thibault Mesplède

Dr. Thibault Mesplède, one of the CTN's newest postdoctoral fellows, is studying the way different subtypes of HIV develop resistance to a new class of drugs. His supervisor is Dr. Mark Wainberg at the Lady Davis Institute/McGill AIDS Centre and he is co-sponsored by Bristol-Myers Squibb and CTN.

The class of drugs Dr. Mesplède is studying is integrase inhibitors, which promote a rapid and sustained antiviral response against both B and non-B subtypes of HIV. They are designed to block the integration of HIV viral genomes in the DNA of the host cell. As integration is a step in retroviral replication, blocking it can halt the spread of the virus.

"It is essential to uncover, through the cell culture experiments we do in the laboratory, if different subtypes develop their own specific resistance to the drugs," says Dr. Mesplède.

Throughout the world the HIV epidemic has several predominant genetic subtypes. Dr. Mesplède's research may provide valuable and targeted information for dealing with drug resistance in multiple subtypes, and therefore be



applicable to multiple regions and populations.

"I'm just a scientist," says Mesplède. "The health issue that we are facing goes beyond research. We must address maternal health, malnutrition, water and sanitation. Although I cannot address all these issues, I'll direct my energy into my research. Even a modest contribution is very rewarding."

Mesplède will be presenting research from his BMS/CTN Postdoctoral Fellowship at the CTN Postdoctoral Fellowship Symposium on April 21 as part of the annual CAHR conference in Montreal.

Call for Postdocs applicants

Thanks to the generous financial support of our sponsors, the CTN Postdoctoral Fellowship Program is offering eight awards for the 2012-13 cycle. Sponsors include Bristol-Myers Squibb, CANFAR, Gilead Sciences Canada, Merck Canada, and ViiV Healthcare.

The CTN Postdoctoral Fellowship Awards Program facilitates HIV and co-infections research by providing funding to candidates to write a trial protocol and to develop and run their own study. Each fellow receives salary and benefits totaling \$50,000 per year. An additional travel allowance of up to \$5,000 per year is available for expenses claimed.

One International Fellowship is also available to train a scientist committed to developing and conducting HIV treatment or prevention research studies in a resource-limited setting. The amount of this award will be consistent with local rates and will include travel to one semi-annual meeting in Canada. This award is made possible by fundraising, individual donations and other sources outside of CIHR's main funding to the CTN.

The submission deadline is January 31. Download guidelines and application forms at www.hivnet.ubc.ca.

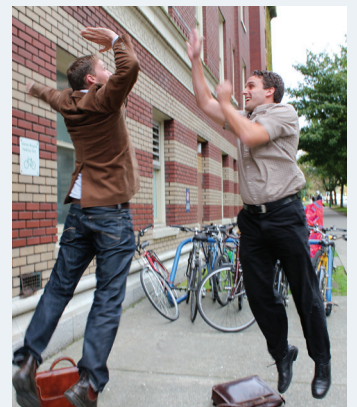
Docs bring new energy to fight a growing epidemic in Saskatchewan

With the highest rate of new incidents of HIV in Canada, three Saskatchewan doctors are taking on the epidemic. Drs. Stuart Skinner, Ryan Meili and Kris Stewart have been instrumental in forming the Saskatoon HIV AIDS Research Endeavor (SHARE).

In the fall of 2011, they met with CTN staff and researchers in Vancouver, including Drs. Brian Conway, Robert Hogg, Jamie Scott and Patricia Spittal and toured the Downtown Infectious Diseases Clinic, the Dr. Peter Centre, and the Vancouver Native Health Clinic.

"We really need to increase linkage into care for our patients who have HIV in Saskatchewan," says Skinner. "By talking to researchers and visiting clinics in Vancouver we hope to learn what models for treatment and care would work well back home."

Through the support of the CTN, SHARE hired research coordinator Briana Hagen in October 2011. SHARE is currently working on a community report to better understand perceptions of HIV in the Saskatoon population.



Drs. Ryan Meili and Stuart Skinner flying high on their new initiative.

START-UPS

CTNPT 005

Measuring cognition in HIV

Target Enrolment 50
Principal Investigators Dr. Marie-Josée Brouillette
Dr. Marina Klein

CTNPT 006

The Niaspan® Study

Target Enrolment 20
Principal Investigator Dr. Bertrand Lebouché

CTNPT 007

Hypophosphatemia and renal monitoring in HIV

Target Enrolment 50
Principal Investigator Dr. Mark Hull

CTNPT 010

Examining use of traditional medications amongst Aboriginals living with HIV

Principal Investigator Dr. Jack Janvier

CTNPT 012

Role of recombinant interleukin-7 (CYT107) on mucosa CD4 T cell recovery in chronically HIV-infected immunological non-responder patients

Principal Investigator Dr. Mohamed-Rachid Boulassel

CTNPT 013

Sexologist-delivered HIV risk-reduction intervention for HIV-discordant couples

Principal Investigator Dr. Bertrand Lebouché

CTNPT 014

An observational study of Kaletra/ Celsentri combination therapy for the management of HIV infection in the setting of HCV co-infection

Principal Investigators Dr. Brian Conway
Dr. Harout Tossonian

CTN 252

Study on pharmacokinetics of newly developed antiretroviral agents in HIV-infected pregnant women

Principal Investigator Dr. Charles la Porte

CTN 260

Raltegravir switch study

Target Enrolment 40
Principal Investigator Dr. Marina Klein

CTN 262

Canadian HIV Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Cohort Study (CHIWOS)

Principal Investigator Dr. Mona Loufty

ENROLLING

CTNPT 001

Fracture case-control study in HIV

Target Enrolment 72
Principal Investigator Dr. Darrell Tan

CTNPT 002

SPOT: Measuring the impact of counselling on sexual risk behaviours

Enrolled 205
Target Enrolment 500 (Phase II)
Principal Investigators Dr. Mark Wainberg
Dr. Joanne Otis

Site: Montreal

CTNPT 003

Bone and renal outcomes in tenofovir-exposed infants

Enrolled 5
Target Enrolment 40
Principal Investigator Dr. Jason Brophy
Sites: Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver

CTNPT 004

Effects of HLA allele frequencies on HIV disease progression

Target Enrolment 50
Principal Investigators Dr. Yoav Keynan
Dr. Marissa Becker
Dr. Ken Kasper

Site: Winnipeg

CTNPT 011

Monitoring penicillin levels for syphilis

Target Enrolment 120
Principal Investigator Dr. Paul MacPherson

CTN 222

Canadian co-infection cohort

Enrolled 1020
Target Enrolment 950+
Principal Investigator Dr. Marina Klein
Sites: Calgary, Halifax, Hamilton, Montreal, Ottawa, Sudbury, Toronto, and Vancouver

CTN 236

HPV vaccine in HIV-positive girls and women

Enrolled 302
Target Enrolment 500
Principal Investigator Dr. Deborah Money
Sites: Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Kingston, Montreal, Ottawa, Ste-Foy, Toronto, and Vancouver

CTN 238

The MAINTAIN study

Enrolled 143
Target Enrolment 218
Principal Investigator Dr. William Cameron
Sites: Calgary, Hamilton, Kingston, Montreal, Ottawa, Sherbrooke, Ste-Foy, Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg

CTN 240

Valacyclovir in delaying antiretroviral treatment entry (VALIDATE) trial

Enrolled 53
Target Enrolment 480
Principal Investigators Dr. Sharon Walmsley
Dr. Darrell Tan

Sites: Buenos Aires, Argentina, Rio de Janeiro et São Paulo, Brazil, Edmonton, Halifax, Hamilton, Montreal, Ottawa, Ste-Foy, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, and Windsor

CTN 244

STOP HIV and AIDS in IDU

Enrolled 772
Target Enrolment 2,000
Principal Investigator Dr. Julio Montaner
Site: Vancouver

CTN 247

Canadian cohort of HIV-positive slow progressors

Enrolled 175
Target Enrolment 150+
Principal Investigator Dr. Cécile Tremblay
Sites: Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Montreal, Ottawa, Saskatoon, Sherbrooke, Ste-Foy, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, and Winnipeg

CTN 254

Inflammation as a predictor of HIV disease progression

Enrolled 64
Target Enrolment 580
Principal Investigators Dr. Darrell Tan
Dr. Mark Hull

Sites: Calgary, Halifax, Hamilton, Kingston, London, Montreal, Ottawa, Sudbury, Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg

CTN 256

Phase IIB study of efficacy and safety of AGS-004

Enrolled 17
Target Enrolment 12
Principal Investigator Dr. Jean-Pierre Routy
Site: Montreal

CTN 257

Impact of HIV on mucosa

Enrolled 10
Target Enrolment 90
Principal Investigator Dr. Jean-Pierre Routy
Sites: Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto

DATA FOLLOW-UP

CTNPT 008

HIV quit smoking study

Enrolled 49
Principal Investigators Dr. Louise Balfour
Dr. Paul MacPherson

CTN 198

Supportive therapy for adherence to antiretroviral treatment (STAART)

Enrolled 100
Target Enrolment 112
Principal Investigators Dr. Louise Balfour
Dr. William Cameron

CTN 246

Chloroquine to reduce T cell immune activation in HIV-infected individuals

Enrolled 19
Principal Investigator Dr. Jean-Pierre Routy

REPORTING

CTN 147

Early vs delayed pneumococcal vaccination

Enrolled 80
Principal Investigator Dr. Walter Schlech

CTN 194

Peg-interferon and citalopram in co-infection (PICCO)

Enrolled 76
Principal Investigator Dr. Marina Klein

CTN 216

Argon plasma coagulation for anal dysplasia in MSM

Enrolled 20
Principal Investigators Dr. Alexandra de Pokomandy
Dr. George Ghattas

CTN 233

Pharmacokinetics of antiretroviral (ARV) therapy in HIV-positive women

Enrolled 98
Principal Investigator Dr. Mona Loufty

CTN 242

Canadian observational cohort (CANOC) collaboration

Target Enrolment 18,000 (from 6 databases)
Principal Investigator Dr. Robert Hogg

CTN 253

H1N1 flu vaccine study in HIV-positive adults

Enrolled 150
Principal Investigator Dr. Curtis Cooper

For more information on these and other trials please visit www.hivnet.ubc.ca or call the CTN at 1-800 661 4664.

See *HIV Research Needs You* (poster insert) for more on enrolling studies.

News briefs

New pilot study proposal submissions are due this March. For more info email: ctninfo@hivnet.ubc.ca.

AIDS 2012, the 19th International AIDS Conference, takes place from July 22-27 in Washington, DC.

The Network is pleased to welcome Earl Nowgesic to the CTN Community Advisory Committee (CAC) representing the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN). He is currently a PhD candidate at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto and holds a three-year CIHR Fellowship. Mr. Nowgesic replaces Anita Benoit who is now a CTN postdoctoral fellow. Returning to CAC is Ian DeAbreu, replacing Curtis Spicer as the representative for the Canadian Hemophilia Society.

Heiko Decosas joins the CTN's National Centre as the new communications and information officer. Heiko recently completed a multimedia HIV project in Ghana as part of his master's at Simon Fraser University. Among his many duties, Heiko will be promoting clinical trials through writing plain language trial descriptions and writing articles in community-based publications. He replaces Suzanne MacCarthy who is working on her master's degree in Europe. Welcome Heiko!



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Networks

Sourcing new ideas for clinical trial recruitment



As pictured above, Networkers gathered to discuss what makes for successful enrolment at a Recruitment Think Tank during the semi-annual meetings in Montreal this past fall. CTN National Director Dr. Martin Schechter moderated a panel of three featuring the perspectives of an investigator, a study coordinator and a community member in Dr. Bill Cameron, Rosie Clarke and José Sousa, respectively.

Participants at the meeting agreed that there is no magic formula for increasing recruitment. They highlighted the importance of starting with research questions that are relevant to community members and engaging family doctors and healthcare providers to consider making clinical research a part of routine healthcare. Opening lines of communication, including explorations in social media, can help ensure that the message for recruitment gets out to the community and that the results are shared and understood by those that need to know.

During the meeting Dr. Schechter said that the climate for clinical trial recruitment was changing. Overall he noted that there was a 26 per cent decline globally in trial enrolment since 2008, with Canada experiencing a drop of 43 per cent. Specific to HIV-related trials, it is clear that the success of HAART has dramatically shifted the research landscape. The new goal is to understand the changes, identify communities' needs and run compelling studies that continue the drive towards better treatments and a cure for HIV and related health complications.

The discussion on this topic is only beginning; if you have any feedback or ideas contact ctninfo@hivnet.ubc.ca.

Publications and presentations

This list includes some of the recent publications and presentations of Network investigators and staff.

Anis AH, Nosyk B, Sun H, Guh DP, Bansback N, Li X, Barnett PG, Joyce V, Swanson KM, Kyriakides TC, Holodniy M, Cameron DW, Brown ST; OPTIMA Team1. "Quality of life of patients with advanced HIV/AIDS: measuring the impact of both AIDS-defining events and non-AIDS serious adverse events." *J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr.* 2009 Aug 15;51(5):631-9.

Boulassel MR, Chomont N, Pai NP, Gilmore N, Sékaly RP, Routy JP. "CD4 T cell nadir independently predicts the magnitude of the HIV reservoir after prolonged suppressive antiretroviral therapy." *J Clin Virol.* 2011 Oct 21. [Epub ahead of print]

Cescon AM, Cooper C, Chan K, Palmer AK, Klein MB, Machouf N, Loutfy MR, Raboud J, Rachlis A, Ding E, Lima VD, Montaner JS, Rourke SB, Smieja M, Tsoukas C, Hogg RS; CANOC Collaboration. "Factors associated with virological suppression among HIV-positive individuals on highly active antiretroviral therapy in a multi-site Canadian cohort." *HIV Med.* 2011 Jul;12(6):352-60. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-1293.2010.00890.x. Epub 2010 Nov 8.

Cooper C, Thorne A; on behalf of the CIHR Canadian HIV Trials Network (CTN) Influenza Vaccine Research Group. "Influenza vaccine Oculorespiratory syndrome incidence is reduced in HIV." *Vaccine.* 2011 Oct 19;29(45):7876-7877. Epub 2011 Aug 26.

García F, Routy JP. "Challenges in dendritic cell-based therapeutic vaccination in HIV-1 infection workshop in dendritic cell-based vaccine clinical trials in HIV-1." *Vaccine.* 2011 Sep 2;29(38):6454-63. Epub 2011 Jul 23.

Holodniy M, Brown ST, Cameron W, Kyriakides TC, Angus B, Babiker A, Singer J, Owens DK, Anis A, Goodall R, Hudson F, Pasieczny M, Russo J,

Schechter M, Deyton L, Darbyshire J. "Results of antiretroviral treatment interruption and intensification in advanced multi-drug resistant HIV infection from the OPTIMA trial." *PLoS ONE.* March 2011, 6(3): e14764.

Kamya P, Tsoukas CM, Boulet S, Routy JP, Thomas R, Côté P, Boulassel MR, Lessard B, Kaul R, Ostrowski M, Kovacs C, Tremblay CL, Bernard NF. "T cell Activation does not drive CD4 decline in longitudinally followed HIV-infected Elite Controllers." *AIDS Res Ther.* 2011 Jun 16;8(1):20.

Mbugbaw L, Shurik E. "Community participation in HIV/AIDS programs" in *Impact, Awareness and Social Implications of living with HIV/AIDS* ed. Barros, E. InTech 2011 Oct.

McVey M, Cameron W, MacPherson P. "When infections collide – gummatous syphilis in an HIV-infected individual." *Int J Infect Dis.* 2010 Sep;14 Suppl 3:e283-6. Epub 2010 Mar 24.

SMART Study Group, Peters L, Neuhaus J, Mocroft A, Soriano V, Rockstroh J, Dore G, Puoti M, Tedaldi E, Clotet B, Kupfer B, Lundgren JD, Klein MB. "Hyaluronic acid levels predict increased risk of non-AIDS death in hepatitis-coinfected persons interrupting antiretroviral therapy in the SMART Study." *Antivir Ther.* 2011;16(5):667-75.

Tan D, Chan K, Raboud J, Cooper C, Montaner JS, Walmsley S, Hogg RS, Klein MB, Machouf N, Rourke S, Tsoukas C, Loutfy MR, The CANOC Collaboration. "Comparison of abacavir/lamivudine and tenofovir/emtricitabine among treatment-naïve HIV-infected patients initiating therapy." *J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr.* 2011 Jun 24. [Epub ahead of print]

Wainberg MA, Brenner BG. "Role of HIV Subtype Diversity in the Development of Resistance to Antiviral Drugs." *Viruses.* 2010 Nov;2(11):2493-508. Epub 2010 Nov 11.