



**KZNe
News**



VOLUME 1 . NUMBER 5

January 2003

Ed 's say:

Dear Forum members

With this latest issue of E-NEWS we are delighted to announce the launch of two very new and exciting collaborations that firmly place the MRC KZN AIDS FORUM on the map!

Launching this month is the very user-friendly and comprehensive MRC KZN AIDS FORUM mini-site, hosted by the HIVAN (Centre for HIV/AIDS Networking) website (see p.3). The foundations of this venture are based on the belief that by pooling our resources we can enhance networking between organizations and individuals in the HIV/AIDS arena.

We also say thank you and goodbye to our current sponsor, JOHAP (Joint OXFAM HIV/AIDS Programme) and welcome our new sponsor and partner, SAAVI (the South African AIDS Vaccine Initiative).

The SAAVI network

SAAVI is a co-ordinated network linking various centres of excellence in vaccine development and testing. SAAVI groups are currently:

- making novel HIV candidate vaccines;

Continued on p.4

Contents

- Men as care-givers?
TAI expands.
- Vaccine trial update:
screenings and CAB
- SAAVI
- HIVAN hosts
MRC mini-site

**NEXT
FORUM**

29 April 2003

Debbie Mathew:

**Fundraising
issues**

Glenmore
Pastoral
Centre, Durban

12:30

The Targeted AIDS Intervention perspective

Since 1998 TAI has been working with young men in soccer. The decision to target men was taken after TAI managed a project of women living with HIV in the Appelsbosch area (Rural Women's Project) and the director of TAI discovered that many of the women there, used to hide the child's status from their husbands.

The common reason for not telling the husband was that the husbands would beat their wives for allowing the children to contract HIV (women said they would get the same reaction as when their daughters fell pregnant). The women went on to say that it would be worse if they had to report that they themselves were infected with HIV.

When one of the women from the group died, the nurses reported to the husband what was wrong and the fact that the wife had known she had AIDS. The husband wept. Wives always complain that husbands are passive and do not play any role in the caring of their children. But the question is, "Do men know how?" A father said 'should he have been informed about his daughter's illness, he would have tried everything in his power to make sure she got better'. This can be interpreted in many ways. One of them, is that he cared for his daughter but

he was just not given the opportunity to care for her even during her last days.

TAI then decided to launch a project that focussed on educating men about HIV. The main objectives were: 1. To increase the level of accurate knowledge in young men in soccer teams about safer sex practices, 2. To enable peer educators to personalise risk of HIV/STI infection and 3. To build the skills of peer educators around condom use, decision making, problem solving and health seeking behaviour (STI referrals, condoms, counselling., etc), 4. To enable peer educators to communicate with their partners about sexual practices.

After the workshop the groups organised their own activities to promote HIV/AIDS awareness and care. Their activities include among others, drama, debating, scathamiya and poetry. The information and skills gained during the workshop enabled young men to care for the people they were close to, such as their family, soccer team mates, school peers and their partners. Initially TAI worked with bigger boys from 15-20 years in soccer teams, but in 2001 TAI decided to focus on smaller boys from 11 to 15 years in 20 schools in KwaZulu-Natal (in an effort to delay the onset of sexual activity). To date the trained groups have been able to work with 72 teams (72 x 20 players per team = 1440 people).

Continued on p.5

The Centre for HIV/AIDS Networking (HIVAN) and the MRC KZN AIDS Forum have pooled their resources in order to further facilitate networking between organizations and individuals involved in the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The collaboration is two-fold: First, as part of the Forum series, HIVAN and the MRC KZN AIDS Forum will co-host four of some 25 annual Forums in which research of the University of Natal will be presented. The Forums will be held in Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Mtunzini. Second, HIVAN hosts the MRC KZN AIDS Forum mini-site on the HIVAN website.

This mini-site includes:

- All issues of E-News, the official newsletter of the MRC KZN AIDS Forum;
 - Regularly updated news and articles;
 - The MRC KZN AIDS Forum database;
- All transcripts, photographs and media coverage of the AIDS Forums;
 - The MRC KZN AIDS Forum Surveys and;

A full calendar of MRC KZN AIDS Forums for 2003.

In order to visit the AIDS Forum site or join the MRC KZN AIDS Forum database, please visit the HIVAN website: <http://www.hivan.org.za>

Please note that as you are an existing member of the MRC KZN AIDS Forum database, your contact details can be accessed via the mini-site database. In order to check and amend your details on the database, please visit the HIVAN website and login using the following user details:

Login: (assigned automatically by the database engine and each unique login will be sent to each database member)

Password: mrcpassword

Should you have any difficulties, or require any assistance with regard to your MRC KZN AIDS Forum database entry, please do not hesitate to contact:

MRC KZN AIDS Forum Coordinator	HIVAN Webmaster
Marlijn Van Berne	Catherine Jenkin
Tel: 031 2034741	Tel: 031 2602976
Fax: 031 2034707	Fax: 031 2602397
E-mail: marlijn.vanberne@mrc.ac.za	E-mail: webmaster@hivan.org.za

Continued from p.1

- Developing clinical trial sites for these SAAVI vaccines and vaccines from other international groups;
- performing laboratory immunology assessment of these vaccines;
- developing locally relevant ethical frameworks for these investigations; and,
- involved with community education, mobilisation, legal and human rights, advocacy and communications.

Putting the collaboration into context, Tim Tucker, Director, SAAVI, said "The Forum will give the participants far more access to cutting edge HIV vaccine science, clinical and community research and issues, while continuing to place HIV vaccines within the broader HIV prevention and treatment arena."

Marlijn van Berne

Vaccine update – screening volunteers for HIV vaccine trials

By Dr Andrew Robinson, Trial Site Manager, SAAVI Clinical Trials Unit.

The Durban site is currently actively recruiting volunteer participants into a screening study who will be ready to be enrolled in HIV vaccine trials once approval has been obtained from the regulatory authorities. Healthy HIV-negative adults, at low risk of HIV infection, between the ages of 18 and 60 years are being recruited and screened.

These volunteers will undergo an informed consent process that will enable them to decide whether to volunteer as trial participants or not in the later trials that are planned and under review. This informed consent process includes information or counseling on what participating in any such trial will entail - the voluntary nature of participation, the number of clinic visits and length of typical

Continued on p.6

Continued from p..2

The younger boys (in schools) have had the most success, especially with the development of vegetable gardens in their schools to care for those children that are either infected or affected and had not eaten properly. They were responsible for watering the plants and ensuring that they were safe from the onslaught of hungry cows, goats and/or chickens. Once the vegetables were ready, the teachers assisted the boys to identify needy children who would benefit from be able to cook supper at least once a week. Some of the vegetables were also kept behind and prepared in school to feed the hungry. With the help of TAI, these young boys have also planted trees which will hopefully improve the school grounds (most of which are barren and without trees and grass).

Recently the same young boys (men rather) have been able to organize and conduct moving AIDS day prayers in memory of parents who passed away of AIDS. Right now they are busy designing messages to warn other "careless" (as they refer to those who do not use condoms and have many partners) peers, and to comfort those who are affected. These messages will be displayed on quilts that the boys have designed themselves.

Other strategies that these boys have developed include: sharing of books to do homework (this has helped a lot where learners cannot afford to buy books); while some others have started saving schemes from their pocket money so that they can put together a few "small parcels" for the needy. It has been really rewarding working with these amazing young men. They are young but they care in their own significant way!

For further information about TAI's activities, please contact Gethwana at:

TAI (Targeted AIDS Interventions)

162, Oriibi Road, Bisley, Pietermaritzburg

Tel/fax: 033-3863475

Vaccine update

KZNeNews

Continued from p.4

phase I trials, as well as some of the potential risks such as the taking of blood specimens, HIV tests, the 'placebo' or dummy vaccine, and detailed information on the test vaccine and the pre-screening study itself.

Only once the trial site is satisfied that the participant fully understands all the risks and benefits associated with trial participation, is the consent be signed and the volunteer enrolled.

Once consent has been signed participants will be clinically examined and a series of simple blood tests will be taken to ensure that the participant is healthy. These participants will participate and be seen by the study personnel every few months to ensure that they still meet all the requirements, until actual HIV vaccine trials are approved. Once this approval has been received, this group of participants will be ready to start a similar process of consenting and enrollment onto the actual vaccine trials. These participants will also be invited to join a participant support group.

If you have any suggestions you wish to share with the Forum, contact E-NEWS editor at the following address:

E-NEWS Editor,

PO Box 70380, Overport, 4067, DURBAN,

Tel: +27 (0)31 2034700, Fax: +27 (0)31 2034707, cell: 082 898 0771,

E-mail: marlijn.vanberne@mrc.ac.za