

Letter from the President – March 2014



Above: The IUSTI President (left) experiencing the cultural diversity of South Africa on Heritage Day

Preparations are now well underway for the 2014 STD Prevention Conference which will be held at the Omni CNN Center in Atlanta from the 9th to the 12th of June this year. This Conference will be joint 15th World IUSTI Congress and 2nd Latin America IUSTI-ALACITS Congress. Several partners, including the CDC's Division of STD Prevention, the American Sexual Health Association, the American STD Association, the National Coalition of STD Directors, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Pan-American Health Organization/WHO Regional Office for the Americas are all working together to ensure that this Conference achieves its aims by employing a programme science orientated approach to develop the Conference theme of 'More STD prevention for the money'. We live in economically challenging times and we are repeatedly required to re-evaluate our varied practices in order to ensure continued delivery of high quality sexual health services in a cost-effective manner. It is anticipated that approximately 1,500 domestic and international STD and HIV prevention program managers, researchers, public health authorities, clinicians and advocates will come together to promote an interdisciplinary dialogue on best practices to enhance the quality of STD/HIV prevention and care during the Conference. A networking event is planned at the world famous Georgia Aquarium. The conference website is hosted by the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/stdconference>. The deadline for early bird registration is 15th April, so I would encourage you all to register ahead of this deadline to ensure you benefit from the early bird rate.



Above: Omni CNN Convention Center, Atlanta, GA



Information on other IUSTI regional conferences is available on the IUSTI website (<http://www.iusti.org/events/default.htm>). I would just like to highlight the forthcoming 28th IUSTI-Europe Conference in Malta (18-20 September), which will explore the theme of migration, recreation and sexual health, and the 18th IUSTI-Asia Pacific Conference in Thailand (11-14 November) which has as its theme 'STI, HIV and Sexual Health Global Collaboration for Effective Prevention'. In addition, I would like to inform members that forthcoming IUSTI World Congresses will take place in Australia in 2015, Morocco in 2016 and Brazil in 2017. The 2015 and 2017 meetings will be held as joint meetings with the International Society for STD Research. The choice of these venues highlights the global influence of IUSTI which is one of our organization's key strengths.

We are very proud to see that IUSTI's Secretary General, Dr. Janet Wilson, was profiled in March's issue of Lancet Infectious Diseases in an article entitled 'Janet Wilson: keeping the spotlight on sexual health services' (Lancet Infect. Dis. 2014;14:195). The article portrays the concerns of some UK-based STI physicians that services will fragment and care standards might fall as a result of new legislation in England which has split commissioning of HIV care from other STI and HIV screening and prevention. Local authorities, rather than the National Health Service, are now commissioning STI services whilst the NHS retained HIV care. Janet successfully used her recent term as President of the British Association of Sexual Health and HIV to ensure that the greater anonymity enjoyed by users of sexual health services has been preserved in the deployment of this new legislation.



Above: King Holmes, IUSTI President (2009-2011), accepting the 2013 Gardner Global Health Award

Congratulations also go to Professor King Holmes, William H. Foege Chair at the Department of Global Health at the University of Washington and a past IUSTI President (2009-2011), who received the 2013 Canada Gairdner Global Health Award, in October last year, for global scientific

contributions to the field of sexually transmitted disease and their effective treatment and prevention. The Gairdner Foundation is dedicated to recognizing the world's most creative and accomplished biomedical scientists and King's award is a tremendous honour and once more put the spotlight back on sexual health. The Gairdner Foundation organized one-day symposium on STIs in King's honour on the day preceding the award ceremony. During the award ceremony, in order to add a personal touch, each recipient was asked walk up to the podium to music of their own choice. Most present would agree that King stole the show with his choice of Marvin Gaye's 'Sexual healing'.

Finally, I would like to inform IUSTI members know that WHO has initiated a formal process to revise the 2003 Guidelines for the Management of STIs. A STI Guideline Development Group (GDG), consisting of technical experts from a number of countries, was established in the latter part of 2013 and the STI GDG had its first meeting in Geneva in December. Several IUSTI members, including myself, are represented on the committee and we wish to thank Dr. Marleen Temmermann and her team at WHO for enabling IUSTI to contribute to this important piece of programmatic work. The goal of the first STI GDG meeting was to lay the initial groundwork for the well-established WHO guideline development (GRADE) process. WHO staff proposed, and the STI GDG agreed, on a phased approach to STI guideline development.

- **Phase 1** (Nov 2013-Nov 2014): treatment for selected STIs, updates of selected syndromic management and syphilis screening algorithms, and clinical management, including counselling, condom promotion and partner services;
- **Phase 2** (June 2014-Feb 2015): prevention guidelines (e.g., health education, HPV vaccine, condoms);
- **Phase 3** (2015): treatment of STIs and conditions not addressed in phase 1;
- **Phase 4** (2015): the use of tests, including new rapid diagnostics, for screening and diagnosis.

A number of PICO (Populations, Interventions, Comparators, Outcomes) questions were identified and a number of systematic reviews will be conducted as part of the guideline process by a team from McMaster University, Canada. Initial efforts will address treatment recommendations for *Chlamydia trachomatis*, *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, *Treponema pallidum*, *Trichomonas vaginalis* (use in pregnancy) and herpes simplex virus infections. The algorithms for STI syndromes will be addressed later this year. The importance of this work cannot be underestimated as many countries rely on WHO STI guidelines to inform their own national guidelines, which in turn form a critical component of countries' STI control programmes.