



# STI Global Update

Newsletter of the International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections

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## President's Column

### The Global View of STIs

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) represent a major health problem in both developed and developing countries, reflected by the estimated 300 million new cases occurring worldwide every year (WHO). Although a decline in STIs has been observed since the 1950s, in many countries an increase has been reported during the last few years, especially in syphilis, gonorrhoea and certain viral infections including HIV. Outbreaks of rectal lymphogranuloma venereum, predominantly in HIV positive individuals, have been observed in many European countries, and the increase in syphilis is highest in men having sex with men indicating a failure of behavioural prevention in high risk groups. Individuals at risk have become less frightened, and physicians and public health institutions are less aware of HIV as an ongoing life threatening infection.

At present drugs exist which can eradicate bacterial, protozoal or ectoparasitic infections. However, challenges remain in countering genital pathogens even where antibiotics are available with the increasing incidence of antibacterial resistance in gonococci. While initial reports were focused in Asia, high levels of resistance in gonococci especially against quinolones has now become a worldwide problem and reflects the ability of microorganisms to escape antibacterial strategies.

The major impact of STIs on public health today derives from viral rather than bacterial infections and many viral infections still represent a major therapeutic challenge. Hepatitis B and AIDS are a substantial problem in Western Europe and the USA but represent devastating epidemics in Central and South Africa, certain parts of Asia and Eastern Europe. Antiviral resistance is an ongoing and increasing problem in the treatment of HIV infected individuals. Pre-exposure vaccination against hepatitis B is recommended for individuals at risk but vaccination strategies may fail because of the high costs in developing countries and public resistance against vaccination in general. It is known that high risk genotypes of human papilloma viruses (HPV) may occasionally carry the risk of malignancy and lead to invasive carcinoma of the genital tract in women and men. The initial results of HPV vaccines

are promising and give hope that genital cancer can be reduced or even eradicated by large scale vaccination programmes, some of which are already being planned.

How can the International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infection (IUSTI) contribute to the global challenge of STIs?

IUSTI, with a tradition stretching over 80 years as an official nongovernmental organisation in consultative status with the WHO, is based on a worldwide cooperation of 5 regions comprising Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North America, and has as its aims the control of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection, and the development of educational programmes. It offers training and management in the field of STIs, and information resources in different regions: the European Branch has established "European STI-Management Guidelines", the Asian-Pacific Branch has published an STI textbook, and a compendium on STIs on a CD-Rom is available. In the different branches, a regional network of experts act as a link between different countries, regions, and globally. The regular publication of newsletters has started with this very first one, and the organisation's homepage ([www.iusti.org](http://www.iusti.org)) offers an additional option for our members to gain information.

Conferences and meetings on a worldwide or regional basis are regularly planned in different parts of the world, and information is also available on the internet. You are welcome to join the regional meetings in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (14<sup>th</sup> IUSTI-Asian Pacific Conference, 27-30 July, 2006) or in Versailles, France (22<sup>nd</sup> IUSTI Europe Conference on STIs, 19-21 October 2006) and to attend the world conference on STIs in 2007, a joint meeting together with the ISSTD in USA (Seattle).

Do you want to actively contribute, do you have ideas, comments or suggestions for collaborative work with us?

Let me assure you that you are most welcome to join IUSTI and collaborate with us in order to decrease and prevent STIs in your own country and as a platform for cooperation and communication, for the exchange of experience, and to share new developments in all aspects of STIs.

*Angelika Stary*  
*IUSTI world president*

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## IUSTI News

### European Guidelines on Proctitis:

A new European Guideline on Proctitis has been commissioned and is currently in production. The guideline authors are Dr. Sandy McMillan (UK), Dr. Henry De Vries (NL) and Dr. Pieter Van Voorst Vader (NL). Those interested in providing input to the guideline are asked to contact the guideline editor - Prof. Jonathan Ross at jonathan.ross@hobtpct.nhs.uk

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### ART anti AIDS Program in Ukraine

Many experts believe that HIV is spreading faster in Ukraine than in any other country of Europe. Poverty, ignorance, unemployment and a sharp reduction in preventive care services have all contributed to this with a current HIV prevalence of 1%.

The SALUS Foundation was established to meet the needs of the Western Ukraine population in the area of HIV/AIDS and STI prevention. One its' most effective preventive programs is **ART anti AIDS**. It has developed since 1997 using different kinds of art competition dedicated to HIV/AIDS prevention. The Program is the first one in Ukraine to connect art and AIDS prevention including an explanation of symbol of the **RED RIBBON**. More than 500 artists and designers from throughout Ukraine took part in the competitions between 1997-2005. The most interesting competitions were **FASHION 2000 anti AIDS**, **BODY ART anti AIDS** (2002), **ARTISTIC SUIT anti AIDS** (2003), **PHOTO anti AIDS** (2005).

During the **FASHION 2000 anti AIDS** participants from 8 cities of Ukraine came to Lviv to perform in the fashion show. All the dresses were decorated with red ribbons and slogans related to HIV/AIDS. Participants of the **BODY ART anti AIDS** competition impressed the audience with their imagination and use of the body art technique. **ARTISTIC SUIT anti AIDS** has also demonstrated a diversity of artistic ideas. All the events were performed in well known places - Palace of Art or Sport Palace - where the audiences found them to be attractive and interesting. Thousands of people attended the events which also generated interest in mass media including television coverage. The main idea of the **ART anti AIDS** program is to involve people, and especially creative youth, to develop anti AIDS artworks and spread the message of how to prevent HIV.

We have learned that Ukrainian youth strongly supports the development of artistic events dedicated to HIV/AIDS prevention. The program improves knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention and makes the problem of AIDS more visible.

The effectiveness of the **ART anti AIDS** Program in Ukraine is encouraging and in the future the SALUS Foundation plans to develop graphic art and computer art competitions, to involve more artists in [www.iusti.org](http://www.iusti.org)

the program and to extend the project internationally. There are no borders for AIDS. There are no borders for joint efforts to prevent it



An example of ART anti AIDS

*Oleksandra Sluzhynska, Andriy Vasylyev, Ostap Vasylyev*  
 SALUS Charitable Foundation, Lviv, Ukraine  
[www.salus.org.ua](http://www.salus.org.ua)

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## Research Review

### What Is New In Sexual Behavior: Sex Toys, Cyber Brothels and Sextacy

Unprecedented changes are taking place in sexual behavior globally. These changes are happening in the industrialized countries of the North and in the developing countries of the South. They apparently involve high income, upper classes as well as the poor and unemployed. The observed patterns include changes in sexual behaviors of individuals, changes in sexual mixing patterns across social classes within societies as well as changes in sexual mixing patterns across societies. Moreover, the demographic, social, economic and political forces fuelling these changes are such that there is reason to believe the future will bring more expansion in recreational sex.

Technological advances such as the internet, cell phones and other instant messaging devices facilitate efficient and low cost hook-ups between potential sex partners and between buyers and sellers of sexual services. Numbers of cyber brothels easily accessible through the internet have been increasing remarkably.

Recently developed biomedical products such as Viagra, Cialis, and Elektra enhance sexual functioning and pleasure among men and women. Organized crime has become increasingly involved in the trafficking of children and young women, mostly for sexual purposes. As organized crime assures that commercial sex is available and widely accessible in acceptable ways and at an acceptable cost, the volume of such sexual transaction expands. Attitudes toward and practice of non-conventional sexual behaviors appear to be changing rapidly.

Easy and private access to sex toys through the internet has resulted in remarkable increases in sales of sex toys. The internet has also facilitated the mushrooming of so called "sexual networking parties".

Natural and man made disasters such as earthquakes, Tsunamis, economic collapse, civil wars and wars between national states, political oppression and ordinary poverty and unemployment have resulted in remarkable increases in the numbers of people who volunteer themselves or others in their family (often daughters) to practice exchange of sex for money. Such disasters have also created fertile ground for organized crime to buy or steal children and young women to be employed by the sex industry.

Globalization, the expansion of capitalism and the market economy globally, has resulted in the creation of new desire for ownership of consumer goods among young people in many developing countries; such that young people are willing to exchange sex for money in order to be able to buy the next fashionable dress, pair of shoes or cosmetics.

Drug use and drug dependency have become very widespread in both the industrialized North and the developing South, mostly as a result of distribution of drugs by organized crime. For a large number of people in most societies drug dependence can only be sustained and financed through stealing and robbery (mostly for men) or sex work (mostly for women).

In other words, both the demand and supply for sexual transactions appear to be increasing simultaneously. Moreover, there are very effective processes in place that efficiently bring the demand and supply for sexual transactions together. These processes include: the flow of information through networks facilitated by the internet; travel for business and tourism, sex tourism; economically motivated migrations; some of which is for the purpose of selling sex, politically motivated migration; trafficking of women and children for sex; and wars.

Whether STD prevention programs are ready to meet the challenges of the new millennium remains to be seen.

*Sevgi O. Aral*

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## **Regional Reports**

### Europe

I am delighted to announce the appointment of Dr Airi Poder, from Tartu in Estonia, as the new Chair of the Board of IUSTI-Europe. Dr Poder has been the Estonian national representative on the Board for many years, and many colleagues will be aware of

the dedication she has shown to the field and to IUSTI over many years.

From 19-21 October 2006 the 22<sup>nd</sup> Conference of IUSTI-Europe will be taking place in Versailles, France. A strong team has put together an outstanding meeting, with leadership provided by Dr Michel Janier (Chairman of the Local Organising Committee) and Dr Willem Van Der Meijden (Chair of the International Scientific Committee). Full information is available from the conference website ([www.iusti2006.com](http://www.iusti2006.com)).

In autumn 2007 the IUSTI-Europe conference will be held in Croatia (local host Dr Mhael Skerlev, ISC Chair Derek Freedman), and in 2008 there will be a conference in Italy (local host, Dr Marco Cusini).

Various national meetings are taking place in the European Region during 2006, some of which IUSTI-Europe has officially endorsed. These include: the Spanish society meeting in Oviedo in March; the German society meeting in Dresden in May; the Italian society meeting in Ascoli Piceno in April; the Bulgarian society meeting in Plovdiv in May.

Finally, I wish to make colleagues aware that the United Nations Population Fund for Europe and Central Asia, based in Bratislava in Slovakia, would be interested to hear from physicians with expertise in the fields of STI and HIV for short-term consultancy work. Further information, including application forms, can be obtained from their website ([www.unfpa.cst.sk/cst\\_services\\_CR.htm](http://www.unfpa.cst.sk/cst_services_CR.htm)).

*Keith Radcliffe*

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### Africa



Prof David Lewis

### **Focus on Africa's New Regional Director**

Professor David Lewis was appointed as the new Regional Director for IUSTI – Africa at the world IUSTI meeting in Bangkok in November 2005. His current position is Head of the Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Reference Centre at the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) in Johannesburg, South Africa. Professor Lewis holds honorary academic positions at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, the Institute of Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine at the

University of Cape Town and at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

The STI Reference Centre at the NICD is involved in assisting with national clinical STD surveillance programmes in five African countries (South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland) as well as co-ordinating a new national microbiological surveillance programme for South Africa. The department has a long history of operational research and has been active in engaging disadvantaged communities through the provision of syndromic management and periodic presumptive therapy for women at high risk of STIs and HIV/AIDS.

Professor Lewis is currently busy establishing a database of researchers, public health workers, clinicians and policy makers active in the field of STIs on the African continent. To this end, he is working closely with the World Health Organisation through Dr Francis Ndowa. Once the database is established, he hopes to both develop the membership and work of IUSTI in Africa as well as to strengthen the informal STI network that currently exists.

#### HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you work in Africa in the STI field and wish to be placed on the IUSTI-AFRICA database, please send your details to Ms Aulette Goliath at [auletteg@nicd.ac.za](mailto:auletteg@nicd.ac.za)

David Lewis

#### North America

The American STD Association and its members are involved in the following activities

**New Treatment Guidelines:** The 2006 STD treatment guidelines are expected to be released in early summer. The guidelines will emphasize increased screening for Chlamydia infection, increased use of herpes serological tests to diagnose uninfected persons, and increased antimicrobial resistance in *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, especially QRNG. ASTDA members will be involved in disseminating these guidelines to the medical community

**Syphilis and Other STI Trends:** There continue to be troubling increases in bacterial STIs in homosexual men, while incidence in minority heterosexuals, the traditional high risk group, is declining. Depending on the region of the country, male/female ratio for early syphilis ranged from 4-10 (MMWR; March 18,2006). There have been similar increases in rectal/pharyngeal gonorrhoea.

**Behavioral Intervention.** The government continues to promote abstinence-only interventions for sexually active persons. The Society of Adolescent Medicine has published a position statement declaring these interventions to be unethical (Journal of Adolescent Health 38 (2006) 83-87). The ASTDA is supporting this position.

**STI Funding.** The funding outlook for STI research and service activities is not promising. Funding levels

at the National Institutes of Health, the major research funding agency, are expected to be level with previous years—representing a net decrease after inflation. The Centers for Disease Control, which provides support for operations, is expecting a net decrease of approximately 5%. The only bright spot is that a number of state and local governments have expanded STI service funding streams.

**HPV Vaccine Approval Process:** One of the most exciting interventions, the HPV vaccine, has been submitted for the approval process. The Merck vaccine is currently being reviewed by the Food and Drug Administration, where approval is expected. It will then be submitted to the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which makes recommendations for implementation. One of the most contentious proposals is the recommended timing of vaccination. The scientific consensus is that vaccination should occur at age 11-12. Fundamentalist groups may oppose this recommendation, claiming that vaccination will lead to sexual disinhibition.

**STD National Conference.** The CDC and the ASTDA are sponsoring the STD National Prevention Conference, in Jacksonville Florida, 8-11 May 2006. Over 350 abstracts have been accepted, and we are expecting 1,200 registrants. Materials can be viewed at [www.stdconference.org](http://www.stdconference.org).

Jonathan Zenilman

## Conference Update

#### ***IUSTI Events:***

**14th IUSTI Asia Pacific International Conference on Sexually Transmitted Infections & HIV/AIDS** will be held at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 27<sup>th</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> July 2006. The conference theme is STI: CHALLENGES & STRATEGIES. More details are available at: <http://www.iustiap.com/>

**22nd Conference of IUSTI-Europe on Sexually Transmitted Infections** will be held at Versailles, Palais des Congrès, FRANCE from 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> October 2006.

More details are available at: [www.iusti2006.com](http://www.iusti2006.com)

**10th IUSTI World Congress- Joint ISSTD- IUSTI congress-** Seattle, Washington, US, 2007. Details are not available. Contact: Prof. H. Hunter Handsfield [hjh@u.washington.edu](mailto:hjh@u.washington.edu)

#### ***Other STI or Related Meetings / Congresses / Courses:***

**EUROGIN 2006: Human Papillomavirus Infection and Global Prevention of Cervical Cancer**

Location: Paris, France

Dates: April 23-26, 2006

More details are available at: <http://www.eurogin.com/2006/>

**Gordon Conference on the Biology of Spirochetes**

Location: Tuscany, Italy  
Dates: April 23-28, 2006.  
More details are available at:  
<http://www.grc.uri.edu/programs/2006/spiro.htm>

**2006 National (US) STD Prevention Conference: Beyond the Hidden Epidemic: Evolution or Revolution?**

Location: Jacksonville, Florida United States  
Dates: May 8-11 2006  
More details are available at:  
<http://www.cdcnpin.org/scripts/display/ConfDisplay.asp?ConfNbr=5769>

**British Association for Sexual Health and HIV Spring Meeting**

Location: Nottingham  
Dates: May 17 -19 2006  
More details are available at: <http://www.bashh.org/>

**30th Annual Meeting of the Israel Society of Dermatology and Venereology**

Location: Tiberias, Israel  
Dates: June 7-9, 2006  
More details are available at:  
<http://www.ortra.com/derm/downloads/FirstAnn-eng.pdf>

**STD Intensive Three-day Course**

Location: Denver, Colorado United States  
Dates: August 8-10 2006  
More details are available at:  
<http://www.cdcnpin.org/scripts/display/ConfDisplay.asp?ConfNbr=5873>

**XVI International AIDS Conference**

Location: Toronto, Canada  
Dates: August 13-16, 2006  
More details are available at:  
<http://www.aids2006.org/>

**Reproductive Health 2006**

Location: La Jolla, CA, United States  
Dates: September 06-09, 2006  
More details are available at:  
<http://www.arhp.org/rh2006/index.cfm>

**Sexual Health 2006 Conference**

Location: Melbourne, VIC, Australia  
Dates: October 09-11, 2006  
More details are available at:  
<http://www.sexualhealth2006.com.au/>

**44th Annual Meeting of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA)**

Location: Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
Dates: October 12-15 2006  
More details are available at:  
<http://www.cdcnpin.org/scripts/display/ConfDisplay.asp?ConfNbr=5897>

**9th Asia Oceania Congress of Sexology**

Location: Bangkok, Thailand  
Dates: November 1-4 2006  
More details are available at:  
<http://www.cdcnpin.org/scripts/display/ConfDisplay.asp?ConfNbr=5503>

*Somesh Gupta*

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## **Conference Report**

### **9<sup>th</sup> IUSTI World Congress, Bangkok, Thailand**

Held from 15-18 November 2005 at the Imperial Queen's Park Hotel in Bangkok, the meeting was hosted by 1) Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health; 2) Consortium of Thai Training Institutes for STDs and AIDS (COTTISA); 3) Thai Medical Society for the Study of STD (TMS-STD), Thailand; and 4) Faculty of Medicine, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai, Thailand.

The focus of the conference was "STI/HIV: Multidisciplinary Approaches – East Meets West". The scientific sessions included 1 keynote lecture, 6 plenary lectures, 20 symposia, 1 workshop, 26 oral presentations, and 58 poster presentations. There were 550 delegates from 47 countries, in addition to 60 speakers from 14 countries.

*Verapol Chandeying*

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*STI Global Update* is a new publication from the International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections. Its aims are to provide an international perspective on the management and control of sexually acquired infections. Regular contributions from the regional directors of IUSTI and feedback from conferences will be supplemented by short reviews of relevant topics and input from the Center for Disease Control (US), Health Protection Agency (UK) and the World Health Organisation.

*Prof. Jonathan Ross, Editor*  
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Further information on the activities of IUSTI available at  
[www.iusti.org](http://www.iusti.org)