President’s Letter

My first three months as the President of IUSTI have been busy.

I had the pleasure of being invited to the 33rd IUSTI-Europe Congress in Tallinn, Estonia, 5-7 September 2019. The Congress President was the very hospitable Dr Airi Poder (the Regional Director of IUSTI-Europe), and the venue was the splendid Estonian National Opera House.

I was then invited to the IUSTI Latin-America and the Caribbean Congress which was in conjunction with the Congress of the Brazilian STD Society and the Brazilian AIDS Congress at the Bourbon Cataratas Convention Resort, Foz do Iguacu, Brazil, 22-25 September 2019. The venue is important, not only for its beautiful waterfalls, but because it is the Triple Frontier area of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. This was another extremely well attended congress with delegates from several Latin America countries. Dr Wilma Nancy Campos Arze was the Congress President and Dr Angelica Espinosa Miranda (the IUSTI LAC Chairperson) was the Chair of the Scientific Committee.

The scientific committee, chaired by Dr Rajul Patel, produced an excellent programme with over 100 speakers and 110 abstracts. The meeting was well attended with 700 delegates attending from 46 countries.
World IUSTI sponsored a symposium on Mycoplasma genitalium with talks from Charlotte Gaydos, Magnus Umeno and me.

IUSTI symposium speakers with symposium Chair, Dr Angelica Espinosa Miranda

Again further details about the congress can be found in the Regional Director of Latin-America and the Caribbean's report.

I have just returned from my third invitation to an IUSTI conference; this time to the IUSTI-Asia Pacific meeting, 23-26 September 2019, which was held at the Fuyue Hotel, Shanghai, China. The Chair of the conference was Professor Pingyu Zhou, who is now an Asia-Pacific elected member of the World Executive Committee. The Chair of the Scientific Committee was Professor Christopher Fairley. This was the first Asia-Pacific regional meeting to be held in China for many years and it was intended to be quite a ‘small meeting’. However, there were 478 delegates and 64 invited speakers!

Professor Christopher Fairley at the Opening Ceremony

I was given the great honour of being invited to speak alongside many distinguished people at both the Opening and Closing Ceremonies

The Opening Ceremony where I gave a brief explanation about IUSTI and its regional structure

This was my first visit to China and I was very impressed with the amount of excellent STI research taking place there, particularly in syphilis. It was also heartening to see the encouragement given to trainees and students to present their work. I made many new friends who I’m sure I will meet again as this certainly won’t be my last visit to China.

Professor Pingyu Zhou receiving her certificate from Qianjin Lu for her excellent plenary lecture

The trainee and student recipients of the Best poster awards

The full report of the conference from Professor Pingyu Khou is in the Regional Asia-Pacific report.

If you read our IUSTI Statutes, you will see they include our objectives of fostering international cooperation in the control of STIs, and organising conferences for information exchange. These three excellent congresses demonstrate how the passion and dedication of our members is ensuring IUSTI fulfils its objectives.

Also, those of you were present as I took over the Presidency in Vancouver will have heard me say that one of my commitments as President was to attend all the regional IUSTI meetings, so I think I have got off to a good start! It is indeed an honour to be able to represent our great organisation.

Janet Wilson, IUSTI-World President

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www.iusti.org
HIV and STI syndemics
The Journal of the International AIDS Society (JIAS) is delighted to announce the launch of its new supplement ‘Understanding and addressing the HIV and STI syndemics’ guest edited by Kenneth H Mayer (The Fenway Institute and Harvard Medical School), and Henry de Vries (Amsterdam University Medical Centers). This timely supplement, stemming from the STI 2018 conference in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, describes the current state of the science related to HIV and STI interactions and discusses challenges ahead for a more integrated response to these syndemics. Taken together, the articles provide a comprehensive and updated review of the field globally, from a review of the relationships between classical STI and HIV in the era of antiretroviral treatment and prevention to the description of the mechanisms of STI-induced inflammation in women, and from a discussion of the biomedical interventions to prevent HIV, “risk compensation” and STI to the evolution of care for STI.

Henry de Vries

Obituary

André Meheus (21 Sept 1944 – 2 July 2019)

The President and all members of IUSTI mourn the passing on of Professor André Meheus on 2 July 2019. He was emeritus full professor at the University of Antwerp and former Department Chair of Epidemiology and Social Medicine, and also former program manager for Sexually Transmitted Diseases, World Health Organization, Geneva (1987-1993) during which time he facilitated linkages between the STI programme and the Global Programme on AIDS. He was also the co-author of the famous and globally used 1999 WHO publication Laboratory Diagnosis of Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

Requiescat in pace - May he rest in peace

Regional Reports

Europe

The Story of IUSTI-Europe 33rd Congress in Tallinn, Estonia

Part One

It started two years ago …
When IUSTI-Europe Council unanimously voted to hold IUSTI-Europe 33rd Congress in Estonia, one of IUSTI-Europe’s smallest member countries, the organisers were well aware of the challenges ahead, yet far from being discouraged, felt inspired to put their very best efforts into the process of preparing for and promoting the Congress. These efforts (for the most part chronicled in previous issues of the Newsletter) seem to have paid off. A record number of 700 participants attended from 46 countries, representing all IUSTI regions. Delegates came from as far as Thailand, South Africa, Brazil, India, the United Arab Emirates, etc. The UK was out in force – BASHH, alongside IUSTI-Estonia, being one of the co-organisers of the Congress – but so were, e.g., the US, and Australia. An unprecedented number came from Russia and Ukraine, this in part due to one of the many “firsts” of the Congress, viz. the introduction of the Russian track. The Congress had over 100 speakers and accepted 110 free abstracts – the latter an exceptionally high number for IUSTI-Europe. The extent of support we gained was ultimately also impressive. Out of the 23 sponsors and supporters overall, three were on the platinum level. Institutional supporters were, likewise, numerous: WHO, CDC, ECDC, Enterprise Estonia, etc.

Thursday, 5th of September
The Congress started long before the Opening Ceremony. Registration was open early on Thursday morning, and during Thursday’s two pre-Congress symposia – the CDC symposium “STD/HIV Prevention Now: What Is Working What Is Not” and the two-part WHO symposium on STI POCT – the hall was filled to capacity. Yet even earlier, on the eve of the symposia, as many as 183 participants had already got their first
impression of the Congress venue – the Estonian National Opera House – by taking the opportunity offered by the organisers to see the internationally acclaimed ballet production “A Streetcar Named Desire” (after the legendary play by Tennessee Williams).

The Opening Ceremony on Thursday night, preceded by a welcome drink, started with the welcoming address by the Congress President Airi Põder.

Backed up by a video specially created for the occasion, packed with rare historical footage, documents and photos, the address gave the audience a survey of the history of Estonians – the oldest Europeans to have permanently inhabited the same territory, brave yet peaceful people who have survived many foreign powers, have always sought to take the best out of the many cultures they have come in contact with, and are now happy to be living in their own independent republic that celebrated its centenary just last year.

After the Estonian national anthem – performed by the Choir of the Estonian National Opera, with the audience joining in – the Congress was declared officially open and the floor was given to its first keynote speaker – the veritable STI legend Keith Radcliffe.

Keith Radcliffe’s keynote, with the intriguing title “A Journal of the Plague Years” (after Daniel Defoe’s eponymous classic), was devoted to the history of HIV. By detailing the sudden, unexpected emergence of a new, more than daunting medical challenge, on the one hand, and medical science’s fast and impressive response to it, on the other, the keynote set the tone to and foreshadowed the principal themes of the main Scientific Programme, which would resume early the next morning.

Meanwhile, the Opening Ceremony continued with the first part of the Congress’s cultural programme.

The cultural programme’s director (another “first” introduced by the Congress) had built the whole programme around live music in its great variety of forms. The Opening Ceremony offered a gala concert which involved the choir, the ballet, the orchestra and several soloists of the Estonian National Opera.

The concert aimed to treat the audience to the best of Estonian opera and ballet as well as the crème de la crème of world classics (Tchaikovsky, Donizetti, Verdi, Gounod, etc.) One of the highlights was, without doubt, Ain Anger – the internationally acclaimed Estonian opera singer, rightly called “one of the great Wagner basses of our time”, who had agreed to come to Estonia specifically for the occasion.
After the gala concert had toasted the Congress with Verdi’s *Brindisi*, the guests went on to the Welcome Reception, where, again to the accompaniment of live music, old friends and colleagues met, and new friendships – and why not even new research partnerships – were struck up, to be followed up on during the Scientific Programme the next morning.

**Friday, 6th of September**

Early on Friday morning, the main Scientific Programme started in earnest – the result of more than a year-and-a-half’s indefatigable work of the Scientific Committee. The Chair of the Committee, Dr Rajul Patel, in particular, went far beyond the call of duty throughout the preparation period, always working on the principle “only the best is good enough”. He can, indeed, rightly be called not just a Scientific Chair but THE Scientific Chair, the epitome of dedication to the service of our profession.

In the main programme, every effort was made to strike the best balance between basic sciences and clinical applications. Altogether there were 20 symposia (2 of them lunch symposia), and 9 plenary sessions: 7 keynote speeches by 8 absolute world-class speakers, a much-anticipated debate (yet another “first” of the Congress), and, crucially, a Summary Session where the main points of the Congress both in basic sciences and clinical applications were recapitulated.

On the 1st of June, with the arrival of the deadline for abstract submission, the Abstract Committee was more than pleasantly surprised by the number of abstracts received. As the nine reviewers sifted through the abstracts, they grew increasingly aware of the exceptionally high quality of the material examined. The submissions covered a wide range of topics from basic science, fascinating case reports, detailed epidemiology and the latest research into novel technologies and therapies. The Abstract Committee was particularly impressed by the number and quality of submissions from Eastern Europe.

Over 100 free communications were accepted for the Congress. Rajul Patel made a point of affording as many authors as possible an opportunity for presenting their findings orally. As a result, the Free Paper Sessions track became far longer and more substantial than expected, with as many as 6 sessions for 46 oral abstract presentations.

The Free Communications Track Chairs – Elizabeth Foley and Daniel Richardson – did yeoman service in ensuring the success of the track. Board members of IUSTI-Estonia, among others, were happy to chair the sessions. The Concert Hall, originally set aside for lunch symposia only, also came to serve as a venue for the Free Paper track. Ample space was, likewise, set aside for the 57 poster presentations.

To help participants navigate a programme this rich and varied, the mobile solution developed by our PCO – Conference Expert – became particularly valuable. While all necessary material was, of course, also present in the Congress book, with the mobile version it took but a glance to see what events were currently going on and where, as well as what was coming up next. With the pertinent abstracts and information about presenters only a click away and, in general, every piece of information interlinked, each participant
was able to easily pick events particularly suited to his or her interests (and even to occasionally make happy snap decisions!). What is more, the solution was interactive in nature, with special features enabling audience members to pose questions and give other feedback to speakers electronically, via chairs and moderators. (The solution is still active on the website www.iusti2019.eu, with added material such as videos of all plenary presentations, four presentations – including the two summary ones – available for downloading, a media gallery, and much more – for participants to be able to revisit and relive the Congress, and for those who did not make it this year to see what they missed ...).

Free paper sessions proved a highly fascinating part of the Congress

The meticulous preparations did pay off. All sessions were eagerly attended, with spacious halls often packed to capacity – this also applied to free paper sessions, even the early morning ones. Posters were, likewise, thoroughly perused and discussed. The interactive features of the mobile solution were put to use, though many participants still preferred immediate, face-to-face interaction. Friday's first plenary session saw three presentations, united by the common theme of Emerging Challenges. Marcus Chen spoke on the regrettable re-emergence of bacterial STIs, and medical science's ways of responding to them, while Daniel Richardson picked up the same themes for emerging enteric infections.

Friday morning also saw the symposia of the Russian track – as already mentioned, one of the many “firsts” of the Congress. Organised by IUSTI-Russia at the initiative of Mikhail Gomberg. Chaired by Mikhail Gomberg and Nikolai Potekaev, the symposium and the subsequent Round-table attracted a great deal of attention from participants from various countries who were fluent in or at least familiar with Russian. The medium of discussion, however, particularly during the Round-table, alternated freely between Russian and English (particularly when Gilbert Donders, who has enjoyed a long-standing cooperation with his Russian colleagues, joined those present).
IUSTI-Europe Treasurer Mikhail Gomberg had done a remarkable job in setting up the Russian track

The Russian track made its mark as an important event contributing to building new bridges between the Russian-language scientific world and the international English-speaking one. The presenters and audience agreed that Russian researchers and clinicians should publish far more actively abroad, sharing their success stories, and that new collaborative projects are very much worth setting up.

At lunch, participants received valuable information about cutting-edge solutions in bringing innovative testing to patients, as presented during the lunch symposium supported by the platinum sponsor Cepheid.

Friday’s Scientific Programme comprised a number of other stimulating events – among them yet more “firsts” offered by the Congress.

On these, as well as the equally riveting events on Saturday, more is forthcoming in Part Two, in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Airi Põder

The IUSTI Europe Advanced Course 2019 "Those who know STIs know Medicine"

The IUSTI Advanced Course on Sexually Transmitted Infections 2019 “Those who know STIs know medicine” was held from September 4 to 5, 2019 in Tallinn, Estonia, as a two-day pre-meeting course of the IUSTI Europe Congress – similarly to the course in Helsinki in 2017. Registration was organized through the official homepage of the Congress www.iusti2019.eu.

The course was particularly aimed at young clinicians developing an interest in sexually transmitted infections. With 75 participants from 28 different countries the course was well attended, reaching a higher number of trainees than ever before. From Estonia, 14 persons participated, followed by 5 each from Austria and Ireland. A few came even from other IUSTI regions such as the US, Australia, and India.

A discount was provided for delegates attending also the congress, and as many as 64 out of the 75 trainees used the opportunity to continue their participation at the IUSTI-Europe Congress. IUSTI-Europe supported the course with 10 scholarships and a few countries (Austria, Italy) also supported their trainees with national scholarships. 26 speakers, mainly from the IUSTI-Europe board, gave excellent lectures in 8 sessions on updates on new diagnostic technologies, on the most recent recommendations for treatment and prevention and on different clinical aspects. For the first time we had included a debate on the influence of HIV on the incidence of STIs. Participants were also invited by Georg Stary to present a case report, and we were able to encourage 8 speakers to actively participate with 9 case presentations. A course booklet and the STI Pocket Guidelines 2019 were handed out to all participants and speakers.

During the course, trainees interacted with many questions, participated in discussions and were generally highly motivated and enthusiastic. The feedback from participants – with a high grading from excellent and good – confirmed that we had been able to meet their and our expectations.

We would like to thank all speakers for their excellent contributions and all participants for their case reports and very active interaction. We would also like to emphasise that it was only with the help of the local organizers that we reached a high-level organisation of the course. Airi Põder as the Congress President and Regional Director provided us all of her support in the best possible way, offering the help of the local Congress organisers, who selected an ideal location in the Congress headquarters hotel, updated the lists and were in permanent contact with the course participants and with us. We want to express our special and warm thanks for this excellent cooperation.

After the course is before the course: in 2020, the course will be held again in Bertinoro, in cooperation with SIMaST and the WHO, on June 2-6, 2020.

Angelika Stary and Marco Cusini
Officers for Education of IUSTI Europe
Preparations for IUSTI-Europe Congress 2020 in Bucharest, Romania, are in full swing

Hello! We have fresh news!
The location of IUSTI 2020 is now booked and we are happy to have the marvellous Parliament Palace as our conference site.
The website of the Congress is functional and ready for the participants to register: www.iustibucharest2020.com
You will already find a lot of useful information about the event there. We plan to add all new information the moment it is available in order to make your trip to Romania and your participation in the conference as smooth and comfortable as possible. Also, newsletters will be sent to those interested on a regular basis.
In this phase we are meeting interested partners and sponsors from the industry. We have sent preliminary information to the traditional sponsors. Your support would be much appreciated and we would be grateful if you could provide us with information on possible sponsors willing to participate.
The Scientific Chair of the Congress – Dr Marti Vall-Mayans – is already working hard on putting together an exciting scientific programme. We are grateful for the suggestions we have received over the last few weeks, and we are looking forward to further stimulating topics.
We are doing our very best to promote the Congress. The process was started with a pertinent presentation at the wonderful 33rd IUSTI-Europe Congress in Tallinn, and we were also present in force at the EADV Congress in Madrid in October 2019. Our friends in Bulgaria promoted the event during the Congress of the Bulgarian Society of Dermatology in Albena in September 2019. The IUSTI-Europe 2020 Congress was also introduced to our home audiences in the Romanian TV show A Doctor for You.
Our team hopes to see you all in Bucharest! Registration is now open at www.iustibucharest2020.com

The IUSTI-Europe 2020 Congress venue – the Palace of the

Parliament in Bucharest – is large enough for delegates to attend in their thousands …

George Sorin Tiplica

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North America

From the ASTDA President

It has been a year since I took office as President and there are many important things going on with ASTDA that I want to share with you. As you are no doubt aware, there have been many changes in our working environment over the past year some of which are positive (e.g. additional funding support as a result of the Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative) and some of which are not (e.g. increasing numbers of state laws that are harmful to women’s sexual & reproductive health). It is with attention to this context that our Association has developed a Mission Statement, revised our Objectives and clarified our core values in terms of commitments that we as an Association can make to the field. I share them with you here and encourage you to go to the website www.ASTDA.org (if you are not already reading this on the website!)

ASTDA’s Mission is to foster scientific knowledge, develop leadership and champion practice in the field of sexually transmitted infections.

ASTDA’s Objectives are to:
- To control, prevent, and ultimately eradicate sexually transmitted infections (STI)
- To support research in all aspects of STI including medical, epidemiologic, laboratory, social and behavioral studies

www.iusti.org
To recognize outstanding contributions in STI control and prevention
To disseminate authoritative information concerning STI
To develop the current and future generations of STI professionals
To promote social justice as an antidote to the structural determinants of STI risk

ASTDA’s Commitments are that:
- We demand rigorous science adhering to the highest ethical standards.
- We promote a sex-positive sexual health framework.
- We are committed to an STI workforce and ASTDA membership comprised of professionals with a wide range of roles and experiences.
- We value a culture of inclusion, equity, safety, professionalism, and respect.
- We recognize social justice as a core value for addressing STI.

As I mentioned above, the website is now a place that we encourage you to go for the latest updates about the Association (and to become a member if you are not one or refer colleagues so that they can become members). We have improved the functionality and the content of the website and hope that it will now become a site that you visit often as we are updating it frequently.

We have also simplified the membership structure. Since ASTDA now serves as the operational arm of the North American Branch of the International Union Against STIs (IUSTI-NA), we have harmonized the ASTDA and IUSTI membership periods so that they both begin on 1 January and go through 31 December of each calendar year. Remember – your ASTDA membership gives you automatic IUSTI membership which provides substantial discounts for many meetings! Of course, your membership also gives you a subscription to the Sexually Transmitted Diseases journal which you can access through our website.

In July, ASTDA presented a bid to host the 2023 International Society for STD Research (ISSTDR) in Chicago. We were successful in our effort to bring this meeting back to the US for the first time since 2007! Keep an eye on the ASTDA website for additional details about this exciting opportunity for the Association to showcase itself and support our mission of dissemination of research findings as well as to foster development of leadership in our field.

At the most recent ISSTDR meeting (held in Vancouver in July), we were able to fund several scholarships for travel. IUSTI-NA/Canada branch & ASTDA held a young investigator’s workshop with the intent of bringing early career stage investigators and public health professionals together with academic colleagues and industry representatives to provide mentorship. Breakfast sessions were also supported by ASTDA to provide an opportunity for early stage career professionals to meet with experts and discuss common concerns regarding publishing, obtaining funding, and addressing sexual and gender harassment/inequalities in our workplaces. We will continue to offer such opportunities at future national and international meetings so if you are interested, or have a mentee who may benefit from these sessions, please check the website for more details regarding these opportunities as we approach these meeting dates.

In other news, we have updated the Association’s By-laws so be expecting to see a request for approval that will be sent out to all members in the upcoming weeks. 2020 will be a Board election year so be thinking about who you may want to nominate (including yourself!) If you don’t see emails about Association news – please check the website!

We are looking forward to a productive year and hope to continue to build & expand our community in the field of STI research, control & prevention.

Barbara Van Der Pol, PhD, MPH
Professor of Medicine, UAB School of Medicine
Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Medicine
Director, Infectious Diseases Laboratory
President, ASTDA
President-Elect, International Society for STD Research

In July, ASTDA presented a bid to host the 2023 International Society for STD Research (ISSTDR)
Over the past few years we have been working to form a Canadian branch of the International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections (IUSTI-Canada) with the objectives to advance STI public health and to encourage and improve the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of STIs. The Executive Committee of IUSTI-Canada consists of: President – Jo-Anne Dillon; Vice-President – Marc Steben; Treasurer – Max Chernesky; Secretary - Irene Martin; Member-at-Large – Caroline Cameron; Coordination, – Greg Penney (Canadian Public Health Association) The membership drive was initiated in January 2019 and we currently have 20 active members.

IUSTI-Canada held its first Annual General Meeting at the Vancouver STI & HIV World Congress meeting on July 15, 2019. During the Vancouver STI & HIV World Congress meeting, IUSTI-Canada held a well attended Pre-Conference symposia on ‘Innovative platforms and interventions against gonorrhea’, highlighting new innovative technologies, novel anti-gonococcal antibiotics under development and potential vaccine therapies. Presentations included: i) Novel targets and drug development for STIs - Dr. Gerry Wright, McMaster University; ii) International dissemination of ceftriaxone-resistant Neisseria gonorrhoeae strain (FC428) - Dr. Petra Smyczek, Alberta Health Services; iii) New gonococcal antibiotic treatments under development – Dr. Jo-Anne Dillon, University of Saskatchewan; iv) Potential gonococcal vaccines and immune response - Dr. Scott Gray-Owen, University of Toronto.

Also part of the Vancouver STI & HIV World Congress meeting, IUSTI-Canada, in collaboration with the American Sexually Transmitted Diseases Associations (ASTDA) held a Career Development Symposium for Emerging Investigators and Program Leaders workshop for young investigators on July 13, 2019. Coordinated by Dr. Marc Steben, the workshop included speakers from the ASTDA, IUSTI-North America, the editor of the Sexually Transmitted Diseases journal as well as industry partners. The workshop included 22 participants and provided a tremendous opportunity to foster relationships with other researchers and industry in the field of STI.

We continue to recruit members for IUSTI-Canada. Membership is open to individuals with a professional interest in STIs.

Contact us at: iusti.canada@cpha.ca

IUSTI-Canada Executive consists of: President: Jo-Anne Dillon (j.dillon@usask.ca) Vice-President, ASTDA EC Member: Marc Steben (marc@marcsteben.com) Secretary: Irene Martin (Irene.martin@canada.ca) Treasurer: Max Chernesky (chernesk@gmail.com) Member-at-Large: Caroline Cameron (caroc@uvic.ca) Coordination, CPHA: Greg Penney (gpenney@cpha.ca)

American Sexual Health Association

- ASHA recognized September as Sexual Health Month. We took part in the World Sexual Day observance organized on 9/4/19 by the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) and during the month launched a social media campaign and released a new podcast episode arguing that consent should be instilled as a value early in life rather than taught as a lesson in high school and college.
- We produced additional podcast episodes over the summer and fall including Bacterial Vaginosis and Vaginal Health; Choosing the Right Contraceptives for You and Your Teen; and HIV Testing Day 2019. All podcast episodes are available at http://www.ashasexualhealth.org/sexhealth-podcast/.
- Released new videos including Sexual Health and the Military for active duty service members and HPV Tests Take Center Stage focusing on the current approaches to screening for cervical cancer including the newest option, HPV primary screening, where an HPV test is used without being paired with a Pap test. These and other sexual health videos are available on ASHA’s Youtube channel at https://tinyurl.com/y5kklbb.
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, through the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), has requested that the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine convene an ad hoc committee to examine:

1) The epidemiological dimensions of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the United States and factors that contribute to the epidemic (changes in population demographics, sexual and other behaviors, social determinants), as well as changes in the understanding of the agents that cause STIs;

2) to the extent possible, the economic burden associated with STIs;

3) current public health strategies and programs to prevent and control STIs (including STI diagnostics, STI vaccines, STI monitoring and surveillance, treatment);

4) barriers in the healthcare system and insurance coverage associated with the prevention and treatment of STIs

The committee will provide direction for future public health programs, policy, and research in STI prevention and control and make recommendations* as appropriate.

*The committee will not provide recommendations on HIV/AIDS or viral hepatitis prevention, diagnosis, treatment, policy, or research as that is not the focus of this study.

The Committee is comprised of a multidisciplinary group of researchers, program experts, and policy makers and includes three members of the IUSTI World Executive Committee: Drs. Charlotte Gaydos, Ned Hook, and Kees Rietmeijer. To date, the Committee has met three times and has started its work on a report that is expected to be published by the fall of next year.

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**Hidden Epidemic Revisited**

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

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**Upcoming Conferences**

November 19-22, 2019
Hilton Alexandra Mark Center Hotel
5000 Seminary Road
Alexandria, VA 22311

Kees Rietmeijer

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**Latin America**

Foz Do Iguacu, Brazil

Last September (22-25), the 12th Congress of the Brazilian STD Society, the 8th Brazilian AIDS Congress and the 3rd Latin-American IST/HIV/AIDS Congress were simultaneously held in the city of Foz do Iguacu, in the Brazilian state of Paraná.

Altogether, 1112 people attended the triple event, which was enhanced by lectures by 88 speakers - 19 of whom from countries other than Brazil.

Over the four days of the event, 419 oral presentations were made; all of them were published in Brazil’s DST Journal (Jornal Brasileiro de DST), available at www.bjstd.org. The three best oral presentations and the five best posters received awards.

The IUSTI symposium during the Latin American Congress in Foz do Iguacu, September 2019
Argentina’s Society for Infections and STIControl (ASAIGO-ITS)

Activities 2019

- Virtual course to update Ob Gyn and Sexually Transmitted Infections health teams
- X Training course for Ob Gyn residents based on Miguel Angel Maglione Clinical Records. May 3. Attendees: 50
- ASAIGO ITS in inland Argentina. Course to update course for health teams, lectures, clinical records, practical workshops on POC Rapid Tests for syphilis and HIV

2. Salta: August 9-10. Attendees: 171
3. La Rioja: August 30-31. Attendees: 220
4. Posadas: Nov 1-2

ASAIGO-ITS participation in genitourinary infection sections:

- FASGO 2019
- TGI 2019: Annual meeting Sept 25
- TGI 2019: Training workshop based on clinical records

Adele Benzaken

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Africa-MENA

Office bearers

In the past year, the office bearers have been looking at ways to strengthen activities of the IUSTI Africa-MENA Region. One of the steps taken was to increase the number of committee members and to assign them specific roles. Thus, the new line-up for the IUSTI Africa-MENA Region is as follows:

Francis J. Ndowa (Zimbabwe) Regional Director
Amina Hanҫali (Morocco) Regional Chairperson

Committee Members & Office Bearers

Laith Abu-Raddad (Qatar) - Regional Treasurer
Ranmini Kularatne (South Africa) - Regional Secretary
Sara Lowe (Zimbabwe) - Web Development Officer

Remco Peters (South Africa) - Publicity & Liaison Officer
Hicham Oumzil (Morocco) - Science & Knowledge Officer

Proposal to host the IUSTI World Congress in Zimbabwe

IUSTI Africa-MENA submitted its proposal to host the 2022 IUSTI World Congress in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. As this proposal was supported at the Executive Committee meeting in Vancouver, processes are being put in place for preparations for the meeting, including informing the Ministry of Health and Child Care in Zimbabwe, recruiting an agent to administer the logistics for the meeting and reaching out to professional associations and pharmaceutical industry involvement. The IUSTI Africa-MENA Region Committee members will soon embark on discussions to put together scientific teams for the meeting process.

Selected Reports and Activities from the Africa-MENA region

Status of chlamydia infection in the MENA region

Researchers at the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Group of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar discovered unexpectedly high levels of chlamydia infection among the general population in the Middle East and North Africa of about 3%, and higher levels exceeding 11% among women who are infertile or suffer pregnancy complications. The study by Smolak et al., ‘Epidemiology of Chlamydia trachomatis in the Middle East and North Africa: a systematic review, meta-analysis, and meta-regression’, was published in The Lancet Global Health, and is the first comprehensive assessment for a bacterial STIs in the region. These findings suggest that chlamydia infection could be responsible for a significant proportion of infertility cases among women in this part of the world.


Weblink: https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(19)30279-7/fulltext

Emerging HIV epidemics among female sex workers and clients in the MENA region

Researchers at the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Group of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar documented emerging and growing HIV epidemics among female sex workers in multiple Middle East and North Africa countries. The study by Chemaitelly et al., ‘HIV epidemiology among female sex workers and their clients in the Middle East and North Africa: systematic review, meta-analyses, and meta-regressions’, was published in BMC Medicine. The study highlighted the recency of most of these epidemics and found a substantial
Epidemiology of key STIs among female sex workers in the MENA region

Researchers at the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Group of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar provided a comprehensive assessment of key STIs among female sex workers in the Middle East and North Africa. The study by Chemaitelly et al., ‘Epidemiology of Treponema pallidum, Chlamydia trachomatis, Neisseria gonorrhoeae, Trichomonas vaginalis, and herpes simplex virus type 2 among female sex workers in the Middle East and North Africa: systematic review and meta-analyses’, was published in Journal of Global Health. The study documented considerable current infection levels, supporting a key role for commercial heterosexual sex networks in STI transmission dynamics in this region. It also identified strong sub-regional differences in syphilis prevalence, but an overall trend of declining prevalence by as much as 7% per year among female sex workers over the last three decades. The article shed light on gaps in evidence for multiple countries, and highlighted missed opportunities for strengthening STI surveillance and response using existing infrastructure for HIV surveillance and prevention.


Status of herpes simplex virus type 1 infection in the MENA region

Researchers at the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Group of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar found that herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1) seroprevalence persists at high levels in the Middle East and North Africa, with most infections acquired orally during childhood. HSV-1 is of growing importance as an STI, as it is becoming the leading cause of genital herpes in some countries. The study by Chaabane et al., ‘Herpes simplex virus type 1 epidemiology in the Middle East and North Africa: systematic review, meta-analyses, and meta-regressions’, published in Scientific Reports, is the first systematic analysis of HSV-1 epidemiology in this region. The findings provided insights on the evolving HSV-1 epidemiology in different countries of the region, and highlighted the timeliness of accelerating HSV-1 vaccine development to control one of the most endemic infections worldwide.

Weblink: https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-37833-8

Status of herpes simplex virus type 1 infection in Africa

Researchers at the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Group of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar estimated a herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1) seroprevalence of 90% in the wider population of sub-Saharan Africa. The study by Harfouche et al., ‘Herpes simplex virus type 1 epidemiology in Africa: systematic review, meta-analyses, and meta-regressions’, published in Journal of Infection, found that the infection is virtually universally prevalent in this region, with no evidence for declines in HSV-1 seroprevalence in recent decades. Exposure to HSV-1 was found to be homogenous in the population at large, with nearly every person acquiring the infection in childhood through oral transmission. Sexual oral-to-genital and genital-to-genital transmission was found to be very limited.


Mycoplasma genitalium AMR and link with HIV infection

Systematic aetiological surveillance of STI syndromes in South Africa is conducted by the Centre for HIV & STI at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases in Johannesburg. A component of this surveillance is antimicrobial resistance (AMR) testing in several key, rapidly evolving pathogens. A study of the prevalence of macrolide and fluoroquinolone-resistance-associated mutations in Mycoplasma genitalium was conducted on genital specimens obtained from symptomatic patients enrolled in Johannesburg STI surveillance (2007–2014), as well as asymptomatic HIV-positive patients at an out-patient Johannesburg clinic (2007). No macrolide resistance-associated mutations were detected in 266 M. genitalium positive specimens; one specimen contained a parC mutation linked to fluoroquinolone resistance (Muller E et al; BMC Infect Dis 2019; 19:148). Surveillance for M. genitalium AMR is ongoing, as macrolide resistance may emerge given the incorporation of azithromycin into the South African national STI syndromic management guidelines in 2015.
Further analysis revealed that the prevalence of HIV infection among symptomatic patients infected with *M. genitalium* was higher than in those without *M. genitalium* infection, regardless of the presence or absence of other STI pathogens, particularly among females (Mahlangu P et al., Sex Transm Dis 2019). This calls for further research on the potential role of *M. genitalium* in the transmission and acquisition of HIV.

**HPV and HIV infection among men living with HIV in Johannesburg**

A recent publication documented the occurrence of human papillomavirus (HPV) infection and anogenital warts among HIV-infected men in Johannesburg, South Africa. Prevalence of HPV was 79%, incidence 2.9 per 100 person-years; warts were observed in 12% at enrolment with incidence of 1.4 per 100 person-years. These findings confirm the large burden of HPV and anogenital warts in this population and highlight the need for strong antiretroviral therapy and HPV vaccination programmes.


**Schistosomiasis and STIs**

A research study conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo showed the importance of considering *Schistosoma haematobium* in the differential diagnosis in patients with abnormal vaginal discharge and demonstrated epidemic overlap between schistosomiasis and STIs in endemic settings. Female genital schistosomiasis is a neglected tropical disease, associated with reproductive tract morbidity and adverse birth outcomes, that warrants much more attention than it currently receives.


**Unmet need for STI care in rural South Africa**

An interesting article is the publication by Hoffman and colleagues about mobilizing individuals with untreated STI-associated symptoms to receive care in rural South Africa. Various patient- and healthcare system-related factors, including disappointment with previous services, were identified as underlying reasons for individuals not to consult for their symptoms. This study provides an important message about the unmet need for STI care in rural South Africa.


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**A study to evaluate a new antimicrobial agent to treat N. gonorrhoeae**

A global Phase 3 randomized controlled trial for the use of the novel antimicrobial agent, zoliflodacin, to treat uncomplicated gonorrhoea is planned for the last quarter of 2019. South Africa is one of the participating countries. Zoliflodacin susceptibility testing of 100 clinical *N. gonorrhoeae* isolates obtained from South African males with urethritis in 2015–2017, revealed that the agent was highly active *in-vitro* against all isolates (Jacobsson S et al, Antimicrob Agents Chemother 2019). Additionally, there was no cross-resistance to any of the seven comparator antimicrobials, including ciprofloxacin. These data support the initiation of the phase 3 trial in South Africa.

**Meetings and Conferences**

**FIDSSA**

The 8th Federation of Infectious Diseases Societies of Southern Africa (FIDSSA) Congress will be held from 7-9 November 2019 in Johannesburg, South Africa. Remco Peters and Ranmini Kularatne have organized special session on STIs with exciting presentations on drug resistance in *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* and herpes simplex virus infections, STIs in key populations, and the relationship between vaginal dysbiosis, microbiome and STIs. Prof David Lewis will be one of the plenary speakers on emerging antimicrobial resistance in STI pathogens.

Prof Remco Peters wrote the Case of the Month for FIDSSA, a clinical lesson on the diagnosis and management of *Trichomonas vaginalis* infection in men and women in resource-constraint African settings. [https://www.fidssa.co.za/Case/July2019_8](https://www.fidssa.co.za/Case/July2019_8).

**IPNC**

The 22nd International Pathogenic Neisseria Conference will be held in Africa (Cape Town) for the first time in its history, from 6-11 September 2020. All clinicians and researchers engaged in studies on pathogenic *Neisseria* species are encouraged to attend and participate. It will be a great opportunity for keeping abreast of the latest developments in the field, and for establishing useful research collaborations and partnerships. For further information, please visit the conference website at [www.ipnc2020.co.za](http://www.ipnc2020.co.za).

Francis Ndowa

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Asia Pacific

The 20th International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections- Asia Pacific Conference (IUSTI-AP), Shanghai, 24-26 October 2019

October 24th 2019 at 8 am, the 20th International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections - Asia Pacific Conference (IUSTI-AP) opened at the Fuyue Hotel in Shanghai, China, hosted by the STD treatment and quality control center in Shanghai, Shanghai Dermatology Hospital, Tongji University Affiliated Hospital of Dermatology (Sponsor) and venereal skin disease Professional Committee of China Preventive Medicine Association.

The Opening Ceremony was hosted by Professor Zhou Pingyu, Director of Shanghai Dermatology Hospital, Department of Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

In the speech by Shanghai City, Deputy Director of the Health Committee, Zhang Huaiqiong, he welcomed experts and scholars from 15 countries and regions. He stressed that the IUSTI-AP meeting in Shanghai was being held to promote international exchange and collaboration and to improve the international visibility of China and its influence in the field of sexually transmitted infections and thus has far-reaching impact.

Then Professor Zheng Jialin, Dean of Tongji University School of Medicine, explained Tongji University School of Medicine’s developments. He congratulated Shanghai Dermatology Hospital for bringing together many top international experts to talk and participate in this conference. He expressed sincere joy and pride and encouraged all to enhance exchanges and strengthen cooperation.
Professor Lu Qianjin, Chairman of Chinese Medical Association of Dermatology explained he was very honored to be invited to speak at a high-profile conference full of academic atmosphere and gathering of many international experts. He highlighted the "Syphilis Summit", where the world-leading experts would be present. Finally, on behalf of the Chinese Medical Association-Dermatology, he gave wishes for a successful meeting.

Prof. Myron S. Cohen, Director of the United Nations Infectious Diseases Agency and the United Nations Global Health and Infectious Diseases Research Department, and Dr. Janet D. Wilson, President of IUSTI, introduced and reviewed the work and conferences of IUSTI, highlighting China’s vital role in the world and its outstanding contributions in combatting STIs. Professor Cohen referred in particular to the Syphilis Summit and it great significance, and proposed October 25th be named as “World Syphilis Day”.

Finally, Professor Christopher Fairley, Chair of the Scientific Committee, on behalf of the IUSTI-AP Scientific Committee and all the participants, expressed their sincere gratitude to Professor Zhou Pingyu, and her team, for their hard work and organization. After the Opening Ceremony, Professor Zhou Pingyu, the Chairman of the conference, announced the official start of the conference.

The conference brought together more than 478 experts and young scholars from China and abroad to share and discuss the research developments and management of STIs. The academic atmosphere was strong, which was stimulating for the young scholars attending the conference. The conference included 64 special invited speakers and attendees from 15 countries and regions. The conference received a total of 143 abstracts, of which 40 were selected for oral presentations and 62 for poster presentations.

The plenary speakers were: Professor Myron S. Cohen on The STI and HIV marriage: forever evolving; Professor Kyle Bernstein on STIs in MSM: what is driving the rise; Professor Pingyu Zhou on Neurosyphilis: the old disease with new challenges; Professor Jonathan Ross on Gonorrhoea treatment: the future; Dr. Joseph Tucker on The pay-it-forward model to increase STI screening; and Professor Meng-Jie Han, on the Progress of HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment in China.
There then followed 14 symposia covering basic science, epidemiology and social science, through to clinical implementation. Four of these symposia were for oral abstract presentations with one specifically for young scholars. This session brought together a number of young scholars from China and abroad. The content of this session was rich, exciting and warm.

The "Syphilis Forum" was the highlight of the conference. The forum invited internationally recognized authorities in syphilis research: Professors Myron S. Cohen, Justin D. Radolf, Sheila Lukehart, and Steven J. Norris, as well as experts from China, Professors Zhou Pingyu, Wangqian Qiu, Yang Tian-ci, Wu Yimou and Zheng Heping, to discuss the global epidemiology of neurosyphilis, congenital syphilis, frontiers in syphilis research, status of development of vaccines and the establishment of a global partnership for syphilis research.

At the end of the forum, Professors Wangqian Qiu and Zhou Pingyu chaired a discussion on "China's Syphilis Research Planning and Potential Cooperation". Professor Zhou Pingyu summarized an overview of China's research on syphilis and its outlook. During the discussion the attendees considered a new direction for syphilis research, and finally reached a consensus on international cooperation in syphilis research.

October 25th 2019 at 18:00, the 20th IUSTI-AP Conference successfully concluded. The awards for the best posters were announced with 9 posters selected and all were congratulated for their excellent work and awarded a certificate.

At the closing ceremony, Professor Zhou Pingyu summarized the contents of the conference and expressed gratitude to the scholars who had attended. Dr Janet D. Wilson, IUSTI President, congratulated Professor Zhou Pingyu and her team on producing a very successful conference. Professor Jie Zheng also gave recognition to Professor Zhou Pingyu’s work and Professor Chen Xiang Sheng praised the conference organizers, Professor Zhouping Yu and her team, for their hard work and called for all the guests to stand up and salute the conference organizers and applaud the attendees.
staff. So, the 20th IUSTI-AP conference closed with the applause of all participants.

Zhou Pingyu

Conference Update

IUSTI Events:

IUSTI-Europe 2020 Congress
Dates: 3-5 September 2020
Locations: Bucharest, Romania
Website: www.iustibucharest2020.com

21st IUSTI World Congress
Dates: 1-4 December 2020
Location: Bangkok, Thailand
Website: www.iusti2020bangkok.com

Other STI or Related Meetings/Congresses/Courses:

17th European AIDS Conference
Dates: November 6-8, 2019
Location: Basel, Switzerland
Website: https://eacs-conference2019.com/

9th International Workshop on HIV Persistence during Therapy
Dates: December 10-13, 2019
Location: Miami, USA
Website: http://www.hiv-persistence.com/

Somesh Gupta

STI Global Update is published by the International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections. Its aims are to provide an international perspective on the management and control of sexually acquired infections.

Further information on the activities of IUSTI available at www.iusti.org