

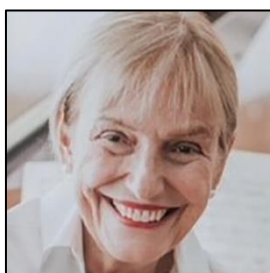
## *STI Global Update*

### Newsletter of the International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections

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#### President's Letter



Dr Jo-Anne Dillon - President of IUSTI

Dear IUSTI Members,

As we embark on another year filled with opportunities and challenges, I am reminded of the invaluable asset of volunteerism within IUSTI. Our success, resilience, and impact hinge completely on the collective efforts of dedicated volunteers like yourselves. I am filled with gratitude as I think of the many activities that IUSTI volunteers engage in, including the demanding work required to produce our international meetings.

Volunteering is a demonstration of our commitment to our shared vision concerning sexually transmitted infections and sexual health by investing our time, skills, and passion into IUSTI. From organizing meetings to coordinating events, every contribution and grassroots initiative, no matter how small, plays a significant role in shaping the trajectory of our organization.

While beginning my research on volunteerism using ChapGPT3.5, I learned that the concept of volunteering can be traced back to ancient civilizations? Did you know that in ancient Rome, for instance, citizens voluntarily organized themselves to work on a variety of civil projects

and to aid during crises, such as volunteering for the Roman Army. Similarly, during the Middle Ages, religious orders and guilds spearheaded charitable endeavors, laying the foundation for modern-day philanthropy and even universities. Moreover, the notion of volunteering transcends cultural and geographical boundaries; diverse societies have long embraced the ethos of giving back to their communities as a fundamental tenet of social cohesion and solidarity.

Closer to home, the history of volunteering in IUSTI is woven into the fabric of its identity. From its inception over 100 years ago (1923) to the present day, volunteers have been the driving force behind every milestone, every achievement, and every transformative endeavor that IUSTI has accomplished. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

There is a new volunteer opportunity within IUSTI. IUSTI is revitalizing its Communications Committee which will be chaired by Ina Park. **We are looking for volunteers** with social media experience and interests so that we can better promote IUSTI, recognize the activities of its members and reach out to new communities.

I would like to highlight the activities of some of our volunteer members who are working in the new ad hoc committees that were discussed in the Fall 2023 Newsletter. I thank each committee member for their contributions as well as the Chairs of the Committees for drafting the reports for this Newsletter. Your work will help to inspire positive change, to foster meaningful international connections and to leave a legacy for future generations.

#### **Wisdom Project (Chair - Jackie Sherrard)**

*Members: Jackie Sherrard (IUSTI Secretary General), Eric Chow (IUSTI-Asia Pacific), Kaushal Verma (IUSTI – Asia Pacific), Rajul Patel (IUSTI - Europe), Kit Fairley (IUSTI President-elect), Laith Jamal Abu Raddad (IUSTI – Africa -MENA), Jo-Anne Dillon (IUSTI President)*

Some of the activities of the Wisdom Committee include reviewing IUSTI officer job descriptions, as published on the IUSTI website, to ensure that they are up to date. The Committee updated

documents, videos, and pictures collated for the IUSTI centenary in 2023 to form a permanent historical IUSTI archive of documents relevant to IUSTI's history, decisions, and officers. These documents are freely available on the IUSTI website (<https://iusti.org/>). As well, links obtained for the abstracts from all world meetings since 2019 have been posted on the website.

To make it easier for those contemplating hosting an IUSTI international meeting, a draft standard template for members/countries making bids for future congresses, both regional and international, has been created. This template will clarify essential and desirable information to assist the IUSTI Executive Committee (EXCO) in assessing any bid. This draft is currently being vetted by the working group and officers of IUSTI. As well, a file is being created for those interested in hosting or planning a Congress outlining the prerequisites for the meeting; e.g., venue, accommodation, various committees and their terms of reference, sample programs, letters of invitation for various committee members, the MOU between IUSTI and the organization sponsoring/organizing the meeting, the role of the IUSTI President and other officers in the meeting, funds available from IUSTI, etc. A first draft has now been completed and will be reviewed by officers before wider circulation for comments.

**Scholarship Committee (Chair, Caroline Cameron; Co-Chair Karen Lithgow):**

*Members: Caroline Cameron (Chair, IUSTI-NA), Karen Lithgow (Co-Chair, IUSTI-NA), Charlotte Gaydos (IUSTI-NA), Sumudu Perera (IUSTI-NA), Kees Rietmeijer (IUSTI-NA), Abigail Norris Turner (IUSTI-NA), Jørgen Jensen (IUSTI-Europe), and Dr. Kaushal Verma (IUSTI-Asia Pacific)*

The IUSTI-World Scholarship Committee held its inaugural meeting on January 26, 2024. Topics discussed included expanding the committee membership to include all IUSTI regions, fundraising approaches, development of Standard Operating Procedures for Committee operations to provide consistency between meetings and partnering with ISSTD on fundraising efforts for the joint ISSTD/IUSTI World meetings. Generating scholarship funds to support early career researchers from low and middle-income countries will be a priority of the Committee.

**Membership Committee (Chair, Jason Ong)**

*Members: Jason Ong (IUSTI- Asia Pacific), Andrew Winter (IUSTI-Europe), Bradley Stoner (IUSTI-NA), Jo-Anne Dillon (IUSTI President), Kees Rietmeijer (IUSTI-NA), Jackie Sherrard (IUSTI- Secretary General), Jonathan Ross (IUSTI Treasurer)*

The membership Committee held its inaugural meeting in December 2023 to better understand the needs of IUSTI members and to ascertain how IUSTI membership might be promoted in each region. The Committee noted that there is a large and active workforce for sexual health globally, but few are aware of IUSTI or are part of its membership. Several activities have started. First, the President, President-elect, and Chair (Membership Committee) of IUSTI have initiated regular zoom meetings with regional IUSTI Directors and Chairs to gather their thoughts and suggestions about membership matters. These meetings will be held every 3 months to encourage and support progress on regional issues. Second, the Committee will look for better ways to engage with current members so they can contribute to the activities and goals of IUSTI. Third, The Committee will review the website so that it can be a more helpful platform for facilitating communication between regions and fostering greater networking among members globally.

I encourage all to attend the **IUSTI 2024** Congress which will be held in Sydney, Australia (September 17-20, 2024). Please visit the website to scan the preliminary program (<https://www.iusti2024sydney.org/>). Although I cannot acknowledge, in this Newsletter, all who have contributed their time and effort to developing the exciting program for this conference, I would like to recognize the Organizing Committee Members (Eric Chow, Catriona Bradshaw, Jonathan Ross, Edmond Choi, Jennifer Power, Kate Seib, Lenka Vodstrcil, Terilyn Ludwick, Rayner kay Jin Tan, Tanya Applegate and Remco Peters) for their tireless contributions.

See you in Sydney!

*Jo-Anne Dillon, IUSTI-World President*

## News

Sexually Transmitted Infections is the world's longest running international journal on sexual health. The journal releases regular podcasts which aims to keep practitioners, trainees and researchers up to date in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of all STIs and HIV.



Latest episodes -

[WORLD AIDS DAY Pt 1: Managing HIV in Young People](#) - We honoured World AIDS Day on 1st December in 2023, by focusing on young people who live with HIV. Adolescents and young people represent a significant share of people living with HIV worldwide. In conversation with Prof Natella Rakhmanina, we will discover the pros & cons of long-acting antiretrovirals to manage HIV infection in young people.

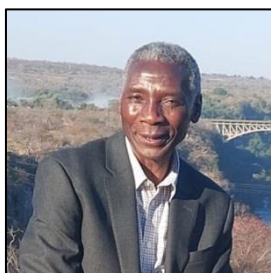
[WORLD AIDS DAY Pt 2: Growing Older with HIV](#) - In our second episode in the series to honour World AIDS Day, we have a conversation with Assistant Prof. Rajasuriar. Today, thanks to effective HIV antiretroviral therapy, people living with HIV can live long and healthy lives. According to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2021, of the nearly 1.1 million people living with diagnosed HIV in the United States and dependent areas, over 53% were aged 50 or older.

[IAS23 Conference Feedback in Brisbane, Australia in July 2023](#) - This episode covers some of the many clinical, vaccine and policy research highlights from the International AIDS Society Conference held in Brisbane, Australia in July 2023.

**STI podcasts are free to access and available on all major podcast platforms including [Podbean](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), [Amazon Music](#). Don't forget to subscribe to be notified of new episodes and if you enjoy the show, please leave us a [review](#).**

## Regional Reports

### Africa MENA



Dr Francis Ndowa – Regional Director of IUSTI-Africa MENA

#### **1. Updates on the IUSTI Africa-MENA Region website**

The IUSTI Africa-MENA Region has embarked on its plans to make its webpage useful and informative to members and other people who access the IUSTI website. Recently uploaded is the latest recommendation by WHO on treatment of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* by WHO.

Also recently uploaded are links to publications on STIs conducted in the region. More such updates are being prepared.

#### **2. Relocation of a Committee Member of IUSTI Africa-MENA Region**

Remco Peters, our regional Publicity & Liaison Officer has, just this month, joined the global STI Team of the World Health Organization in Geneva. On behalf of the IUSTI Africa-MENA Regional Committee, I wish to thank Remco for his contribution to advance the work of IUSTI in the Africa-MENA region as well as for his contribution to the planning and execution of the 23<sup>rd</sup> IUSTI World Congress in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe in September 2022 during which he served as the Co-Chairperson of the International Scientific Committee. We shall miss him deeply in the region, but we would like to wish him success and best wishes in his new post and career in WHO.

#### **3. Highlights of activities and research from the Region**

The Southern African HIV Clinicians Society (SAHIVCS) released and raised awareness of their “Guideline for the management of sexually transmitted infections: moving towards best practice” through several webinars and oral presentation at the 6th Southern African HIV Clinicians Society Conference held in November 2023 in Cape Town. Several presentations highlighted concerns about the increasing burden of syphilis in pregnancy. Draft guidelines for the management of syphilis were presented and are expected to be released in the course of 2024.

The International Conference on AIDS and STIs (ICASA) was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in December 2023. Several presentations were made on STI services in the context of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). The World Health Organization, The Global Fund and the Health Research Unit Zimbabwe organised an expert consensus building workshop on “*Realizing the potential of HIV and STI integration*”. Important lessons to strengthen integration were learnt, and steps forward defined putting STIs higher on the global public health agenda.

#### **New research had outputs which contribute to the body of evidence in the region, including the following important studies.**

- Effects of STI testing on HIV PrEP initiation and persistence in Cape Town, South Africa (de Voux A et al. *Sex Transm Infect* 2023).
- Evaluation of a lateral flow assay for point-of-care detection of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in East London, South Africa (Peters RPH et al. *Lancet* 2024; de Vos L et al. *BMC Health Serv Res* 2023).

- Use of expedited partner therapy for pregnant women treated for STI in Gaborone, Botswana (Hansman E et al. *Sex Transm Dis* 2024).
- Spatio-temporal modelling analysis of syphilis in pregnancy in Malawi using population-level data (Chirombo J et al. *Front Public Health* 2024).
- Antimicrobial resistance profiles of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa (Peters RPH et al. *Sex Transm Dis* 2023).
- Molecular characterisation of azithromycin resistant *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* isolates from Johannesburg, South Africa (Muller EE et al. *Sex Health* 2024).
- A discrete choice experiment of implementation preferences of sexually transmitted infections services in the South African healthcare system (Iwuji C et al. *Sex Transm Infect* 2024).
- Evaluation of doxycycline post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent sexually transmitted infections in Kenyan women (Stewart T et al. *New Engl J Med* 2023).

#### Impact of a potential Chlamydia vaccine in the USA: mathematical modelling analyses

Researchers at the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Group of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar estimated through mathematical modelling that the introduction of a chlamydia vaccine with 50% efficacy against infection acquisition by 2025, along with achieving 80% coverage by 2035 among individuals aged 15–49 years, could lead to a reduction in prevalence, incidence rate, and annual new chlamydia infections by 36.3%, 38.8%, and 35.8%, respectively, by 2035. This could prevent 11,346,000 chlamydia infections by 2035 and 31,427,000 by 2050. The number of vaccinations needed to prevent one infection decreased over time, from 17.7 by 2035 to 12.0 by 2050. Additionally, targeting specific population groups, such as the 15–19 age group and high-risk populations, reduced the number of vaccinations needed to prevent one infection.

The study, conducted by Makhoul et al. and titled 'Impact of a potential chlamydia vaccine in the USA: mathematical modeling analyses,' was published in *BMJ Public Health*. The findings underscore that a moderately efficacious chlamydia vaccine can significantly reduce infection rates and control the disease burden, and targeting specific populations can maximize cost-effectiveness.

Citation: Monia Makhoul, Houssein H Ayoub, Susanne F Awad, Hiam Chemaitelly, Laith J Abu-Raddad - Impact of a potential Chlamydia vaccine in the USA: mathematical modelling analyses: *BMJ Public Health* 2024;2:e000345.

Weblink: <https://bmjpublichealth.bmj.com/content/2/1/e000345>

Francis Ndowa

## Europe



Dr. Claudia Heller-Vitouch – Regional Director of IUSTI-Europe

### 36th IUSTI Europe Congress 26 to the 28 October 2023, Valletta, Malta

The Congress 'Reaching Out to the Hard to Reach' organised so wonderfully by Valeska Padovese was a tremendous success.

The outstanding scientific programme was led by Scientific Chair Henry de Vries.

In 3 plenary sessions, 5 symposia, 9 workshops and 4 abstract driven sessions a selection of topics was covered. There was an impressive line-up of highly acclaimed international speakers who informed on all aspects of STIs, including its clinical issues. This year the program was focused on health policies to improve the sexual health outcomes of socially disadvantaged groups. The social events were wonderful and gave us an insight in the beautiful isle of Malta.



Figure 1: IUSTI-Europe Council Members, Council Meeting Malta 2023

### 37th IUSTI-Europe congress September 12-14, 2024 in Zagreb, Croatia

Mihael Skerlev and Suzana Ljubojević Hadžavdić, Congress Presidents and Marco Cusini, Chair of the International Scientific Committee

It is with our great honour and pleasure that we extend to all of you the most cordial invitation to the [37th International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections \(IUSTI\) Europe Congress](#) to take place in Zagreb, Croatia, from September 11 to 14, 2024.

*Being in love with science of love*

Co-Organizers: Croatian STD Society of the Croatian Medical Association and Croatian Dermatovenerological Society of the Croatian Medical Association.

Held jointly with Annual Meeting of the Croatian Society for the Sexually Transmitted Diseases

## Key information:

- Event Date: September 11 – 14 , 2024
- Event Venue: Hotel Sheraton, Zagreb
- Early Registration cut off: July 15, 2024
- Abstract submission deadline' June 30, 2024

The 37th IUSTI-Europe Congress is an exceptional opportunity for the exchange of the scientific ideas, knowledge, and experience among colleagues dedicated to sexually transmitted diseases and genital dermatology from across Europe and World. The lecturers that have already accepted our invitation represent a distinguished group of internationally renowned professionals, and it is our great privilege that we have developed a very close collaboration with all of them. But...much more than only this, many of the world-renowned experts in the field of STIs have become our good friends, based on **the** warm, friendly, open and sincere atmosphere characteristic of our Congresses and IUSTI Europe in general. Thus, we assure you that each of you wishing to share your experience and, at the same time get some new insight into the dynamic and challenging field of STIs today would benefit by joining us at this outstanding Congress!

The scientific programme will try to cover some of the hottest topics in the field of STIs with the presence of well-known international experts.

Among them:

- the state of the ART of HPV vaccine with a final debate on the potential new uses of the vaccine
- the use of Doxy PrEP considering not only the medical aspects but also patients' opinion
- an update on the state of the art of HIV treatment and the connection between HIV and other STIs
- an update on bacterial STIs and on genital herpes
- the advantages and the risks of home testing

EADV, BASHH and WHO have been invited to organize sessions and six sections will be dedicated to free presentations.

Traditional Croatian hospitality awaits you in our capital city Zagreb...the Middle-European "boutique" city with the unique "Southern

breeze" at the same time, presenting itself in the best possible atmosphere in September, the most suitable time to visit Zagreb and experience its dynamic, vibrant, but also relaxing charm. The Congress Organizing and Scientific Committee will do their utmost to create an unforgettable professional and social atmosphere for every participant.

Don't miss this chance! Awaiting you in Zagreb this September! Most cordially welcome!

Please visit the congress website <https://www.iusti-europe2024.org/> and register for the main IUSTI-Europe event 2024!



Figure 2: Congress Website Zagreb 2024

### 38th IUSTI-Europe congress expected 9 -11 October 2025, in Athens, Greece

We are looking even further ahead to the 38th IUSTI-Europe congress in Athens, Greece expected 9-11 October 2025 led by Electra Nicolaidu.

Please note that the congress location had to be changed!

### IUSTI-Europe STI-courses:

We can report another very successful **Advanced course at the IUSTI Europe Conference in Malta**. This was the first face to face course since the Tallinn course in 2019 and was held on October 26, 2023, the day of the opening ceremony of the European IUSTI Conference at the Grand Hotel Excelsior, Valletta, in Malta. More than 100 participants attended the one day course, followed by the conference on STI. This time we concentrated on only one important STI under the title **"SYPHILIS: from Alpha to Omega"**. The programme raised the interest of many colleagues and offered information on the epidemiology, on different clinical pictures, the problem of syphilis in sensitive groups, followed by immunological aspects of syphilis, diagnostic possibilities and finally by different treatment recommendations. All lectures were presented by the most competent speakers and were followed by interesting discussions and questions from the audience. With more than 100 participants we reached the highest number ever at a course. We want to thank all speakers and chairpersons for their excellent contribution, all participants for their interest and enthusiasm, and the local organizer Dr. Valeska Padovese and her team for their support.



Figure 3: IUSTI-Europe STI-course in Malta 2023

The next Advanced course of IUSTI Europe will be held at the next IUSTI Europe conference in Zagreb, September 11-14, 2024, and is scheduled on September 11, the day of the opening ceremony of the conference with another attractive programme on „Genital Candidiasis and HPV infections: How to solve problems“.

*Angelika Stary and Marco Cusini*

*(Chairs of the IUSTI Europe Educational Committee)*

### **IUSTI-Europe Webinars - IUSTI-Europe Log book – February 2024 (episode 2)**



Figure 4: Derek Freedman and George-Sorin Tiplica

IUSTI-Europe webinars are produced in close collaboration with the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH). The autumn 2023 series started on September 27 with Webinar 20 “Highlights STI+HIV World Congress Chicago 2023”. Some of the most interesting and debated discussions from Chicago were presented to the European colleagues by the lecturers from the World Congress. Kevin Martin (BASHH) presented “Point of care tests and other diagnostic strategies” – as a very useful guide for the support that clinicians receive from the laboratory. Susan Sun (BASHH) and Katherine Thorley (BASHH) delivered the ISSTDR talk on “AMR in STIs” – a very actual problem as everybody is interested in the extended use of some antibiotics in the prevention of STIs. A “*Mycoplasma genitalium* update” was produced by Suneeta Soni (BASHH) and “DoxyPEP” was explained in depth by Manik Kohli (BASHH). The interesting talk of Jennifer Ratner (BASHH) was focused on “Vaginal Conditions and Bacterial Vaginosis” while Claire Dewsnap (BASHH) addressed a problem that is expected by physicians and patients: “Syphilis - A route to vaccination”. The session ended with an overview of the joint session “BASHH – ISSTDR” provided by Uzochi Nwaosu, Dwayne-Wilson Hunt (BASHH).

The webinars continued after a break imposed by the IUSTI-Europe in Malta with Webinar 21 “To DoxyPEP or not to DoxyPEP” organized on December 6, 2023. The virtual event started with an ECDC epidemiological update elegantly presented by Otilia Mardh: Syphilis, Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia European Hot Spot. The webinar continued with Jean Michel Molina (FR) – one of the initiators of the doxyPEP studies, who presented his “Clinical and Practical Experience of doxyPEP”. Chris Kenyon (BE) intervention was on the “Pitfalls of doxyPEP” and he opened the virtual place for a “Panel Discussions” where the speakers encountered a group of IUSTI-Eu experts: Henry de Vries, Andrew Winter, Fiona Lyons and Wolfgang Bauer.

We started the New Year of 2024 with Webinar 22 “STI’s - Lessons from History” on January 31st. A very interesting connection of syphilis and plastic surgery was presented by Carlo Gelmetti (IT) “The nose and syphilis” and we continued with the talk of Michel Janier (FR) who gave his well-documented answer at the question: “Has syphilis been really imported from the New World?”. The lessons from the recent past were learned in Romania and the results of the actual HPV vaccination campaign were presented by Bianca Enciu (RO): “HPV vaccination in Romania: Past and present lessons”. A very special guest - Pavel Chernyshov (UKR) presented the situation in a country tested by the war conditions and demonstrated that a good organization of the network to prevent STIs is able to keep the infections at the same level as in the pre-war years. The last talk of the evening was authored by Michael Waugh (UK): “Are we forgetting the condoms?” which sparked a charming conversation with Derek Freedman.

The webinar series will continue with topics of interest many of them selected by the editors from the suggestions made by the attendees. As the editors of the Webinars, we express our gratitude to the contributors who embarked with enthusiasm in this educational odyssey, and to the attendees who support this project by showing-up in this fascinating virtual world. We acknowledge the excellent collaboration with BASHH that we will be happy to continue. The unconditioned involvement of Chris Ward (BASHH, CME accreditation), Iulia Negulet (administrative work, intro-videos), Ana-Maria Draghici Ionescu and Raluca Lascu (media channels) deserves our acclaim.

Free access to all those interested is provided not only for the webinars but also for the recordings (<https://www.iusti-europe.eu/web/>).

The IUSTI Europe Webinar Editors: Derek Freedman (df@freedman.ie) and George Sorin Tiplica (romsocderm@yahoo.com) (figure 4) are

cordially inviting all STI interested colleagues to attend the webinars and to send their feedback and their proposals for topics and speakers.

### **IUSTI Europe Congresses**

*Derek Freedman, MD FRCPI*

*IUSTI-E Chair for Scientific Policy and Conference Management*

Preparations are well in hand for the 37th IUSTI Europe Congress, Zagreb, September 11-14th, under the capable stewardship of Prof Mihael Skerlev and Prof Suzana Ljubojevic Hadzavdic. The Scientific Programme is in an advanced state of preparation by Prof Marco Cusini, and we can look forward to exciting and informative Plenary Lectures, Symposia, and Workshops, with a focus on Viral STI's which are close to the organisers hearts.

The Congress will be preceded by the IUSTI Europe Advanced Course organised by Prof. Angelika Stary and Prof Marco Cusini. This course has become an established feature of IUSTI-E Congresses, and has proved very popular for trainees and practitioners alike.

A Site visit took place in September 2023. The proposed hotel was close to the city centre, and offered combined Congress facilities and the ability to stay at the same location, which always enhances networking.

It was very pleasant to discover, in visiting Zagreb, a most welcoming city with the preservation of an authentic central European atmosphere. No large multiple stores in the city centre, but a good selection of smaller shops, plenty of street cafes, parks, and central European style beautiful buildings and streetscape. Everywhere we went, people were friendly and welcoming. Prices were well within European levels.



Figure 5: The City of Zagreb

The Congress Website is open – please register your interest – come to Zagreb – meet colleagues – network – and keep up to date with practice and future trends < <https://www.iustieurope2024.org> >

IUSTI Europe does not rest! Plans and organisation for the 38th IUSTI E Congress are well in hand for the 38th IUSTI E Congress,

Athens, 9-11 October 2025, organised by Prof Electra Nicolaidou. The location had to be changed from Rhodes to meet the requirements for sponsorship. However, the Greek islands are only a short trip away. Prof. George Sorin Tiplica has accepted to be the Chair of the International Scientific Committee. We can expect an exciting programme with a focus on dermatological aspects of our practice.

In 2026, there will be a joint IUSTI World and Europe Congress in the beautiful city of Prague. Preparations are soon to start, and we expect that this will be a Congress 'not to be missed'

In 2027 IUSTI E will hold its Congress in Porto, Portugal, and planning will soon commence.

We have found that having advanced planning for our annual Congresses to be useful and practical. We shall be seeking 'Declarations of Interest' to host the IUSTI E Congresses in 2028 and 2029 shortly. This will be an opportunity for our constituent Countries and Council members to make their mark!

### **Are we prepared for a multi-drug resistant STI?**

IUSTI-Europe was recently invited to participate in the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) simulation exercise STI24 SIMEX. A group of national representatives from 22 European countries and representatives from WHO, IUSTI Europe, US CDC, and ECDC took part in an exercise simulating an outbreak of multi-drug resistant *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. The exercise provided an opportunity for all participants, representing national institutions, civil society organizations and international organizations, to share their knowledge, experience and best practices in order to provide an adequate response to a cross-border STI threat.



George Tiplica, Jorgen Jensen, Magnus Unemo

IUSTI-Europe was represented by Prof. Jorgen Jensen (Denmark) and Prof. George Tiplica (Romania). Prof. Magnus Unemo (Sweden) joined the group as representative of The European Gonococcal Antimicrobial Surveillance Programme (Euro-GASP). ECDC was represented in the game by Otilia Mårdh, Ndeindo Ndeikoundam Ngangro, Csaba Kodmon and Juliana Reyes who, just like the rest of the

participants, did not know how the event would unfold. The exercise had been designed by Lina Nerlander from the ECDC STI team and Orlando Cenciarelli from the ECDC preparedness team. Several other ECDC staff were involved as facilitators, including the group lead for STI, HIV, viral hepatitis and TB – Anastasia Pharris.



Otilia Mårdh, Lina Nerlander, George Tiplica

Starting from the first reports of the multi-drug resistant *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* infection, IUSTI-Eu activated its STI Guideline Committee and updated its diagnostic and treatment recommendations. The communication with the international agencies was essential and IUSTI-Eu participated to a series of press-conferences and info sessions. Delivering a correct answer is extremely important to avoid stigmatisation and an exaggerated reaction against certain population groups. The “game” was adapted to the developments of the participants reactions.

The one and a half days simulation exercise was organized on the ECDC grounds between 13-14 February 2024. The event was close to a real-life situation and flexible to allow the insertion of unexpected events as an IUSTI-Eu webinar dedicated to the hypothetical outbreak. The intuitive reactions and the experience from previous epidemiological events strengthened the collaboration among the participants. The involvement of WHO, US CDC and Euro-GASP representatives was effective and useful in crucial moments.

The whole event demonstrates the necessity to cooperate with all countries and all international institutions for preparing a response to a cross-border STI threat.

### Europe webpage

Please stay tuned on our webpage [www.iusti-europe.eu](http://www.iusti-europe.eu), where you can find the recordings of the webinars as well as the European Newsletter archive, a link to the guidelines and most recent information about IUSTI-Europe’s activities.

*Claudia Heller-Vitouch*

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## **Asia Pacific**



Dr Pingyu Zhou – Regional Director of IUSTI-Asia-Pacific

### **Catherine C. O'Connor Selected as Chair Elect for IUSTI AP**

Australian professor Catherine C. O'Connor has been appointed Chair Elect for IUSTI AP, a significant achievement in her career. With her vast expertise and dedication, O'Connor is poised to lead the organization with distinction. Her appointment reaffirms her status as a leader in sexual health and reproductive medicine, nationally and internationally. In her role, O'Connor will shape the future of IUSTI AP, fostering collaboration and addressing critical issues. This appointment recognizes her outstanding achievements and leadership qualities. The news has been met with widespread acclaim, anticipating the positive impact she will bring.

### **Shanghai Hosts Vital STD Quality Control Training and Continuing Education Conference**

From December 5 to 7, 2023, the Shanghai Dermatology Hospital played host to a crucial event: the Shanghai Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Quality Control Training and Continuing Education Conference. This gathering brought together experts from all corners of the nation to delve into various aspects of STD diagnosis and treatment, emphasizing the importance of maintaining high standards in this field.

The conference tackled a wide array of topics, ranging from quality control measures to the swift and accurate testing methods crucial for effective diagnosis. Of particular note was the discussion surrounding the establishment of networks for testing gonorrhea drug resistance, vital in combating emerging challenges posed by drug-resistant strains.

Moreover, attendees delved into the discovery and management of new drug-resistant strains, underscoring the necessity for ongoing research and vigilant monitoring. Additionally, experts shared insights on the treatment of complex condyloma acuminatum and strategies for the prevention and management of congenital syphilis.

With over 300 participants in attendance, including esteemed doctors, dedicated laboratory technicians, and seasoned epidemiologists, the conference served as a platform for collaboration



and knowledge exchange. By fostering dialogue and sharing best practices, this event aimed to enhance the collective understanding and response to the evolving landscape of STD diagnosis and treatment.



Prof. Pingyu Zhou on the course

### Successful UNDP Short Course in PrEP & HIV Prevention

The UNDP Short Course in PrEP & HIV Prevention, held on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, was a resounding success, lasting 3.5 hours. This interactive webinar featured engaging case studies, facilitating participant learning. A total of 24 attendees, including 4 doctors, 9 nurses, and 11 health promotion officers and managers, participated. Noteworthy was the representation from 6 Pacific Island Nations, showcasing the course's broad impact and reach.

### UNDP Pacific Inland Countries Monthly HIV/STI Webinars Attract Participants from 16 Nations

The UNDP has been hosting monthly webinars focusing on HIV/STI topics, drawing participants from 16 countries across the Pacific Inland region. These sessions aim to foster knowledge sharing and collaboration among healthcare professionals and stakeholders.



Mr Aaron Daunny from Federated States of Micronesia asking a question at the course

The webinars covered various topics, including:

- **Update on Syphilis Serology:** Attracting 34 participants, this session provided insights into syphilis serology advancements, offering valuable information on diagnostics and treatment.
- **Challenging HIV Cases & STI Cases:** With 29 participants engaged, this webinar discussed complex cases related to HIV and STIs, facilitating sharing of experiences and best practices.

- **Stigma & Discrimination:** With 63 participants, this webinar highlighted the importance of addressing societal barriers to effective healthcare delivery.
- **HIV Treatment & Monitoring:** With 36 participants, this session focused on the latest advancements and best practices in HIV treatment and monitoring, aiming to enhance patient outcomes.

Pingyu Zhou

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### North America



Dr Brad Stoner – Regional Director of IUSTI-North America

### From the American STD Association (ASTDA)



In the last quarter, ASTDA:

- hosted our biannual Board meeting in Nashville. Among other updates, we discussed results of a recent survey of the ASTDA membership, shared research reports from trainees funded through the 2022 and 2023 [summer fellowship programs](#), and celebrated recent high-impact articles in the [Sexually Transmitted Diseases](#) journal.
- updated our [membership options](#) to now include 3-year terms.
- hosted the annual ASTDA workshop, bringing together 40 early-career scholars and leaders from government, academia and industry to identify gaps in the STI field.
- continued to plan the [2024 STI Prevention Conference](#), to be held in Atlanta on Sept 16-19. [Conference registration](#) is now open, and [abstracts can be submitted](#) until March 29, 2024. Like the ISSTDR meeting in Chicago in 2023, the 2024 STI Prevention Conference has a strong focus on supporting the development of early career scholars.

- solicited [nominations](#) for our [4 annual awards](#) (open until March 1, 2024).
- solicited [self-nominations](#) for 5 open spots on the [ASTDA Board](#) (open until March 1, 2024).

### From the CDC Division of STD Prevention (DSTDP)



- The [2024 STI Prevention Conference](#) will be held in person September 16-19, 2024 in Atlanta, Georgia. This year's conference theme is "Strengthening Sexual Health through STI Prevention." The call for abstracts is open and closes March 29, 2024.
- In February, DSTDP published [CDC Laboratory Recommendations for Syphilis Testing, United States, 2024](#) – Syphilis testing recommendations for choosing among multiple testing methods, establishing standard operating procedures for collecting and processing specimens, interpreting test results for laboratory reporting, and counseling and treating patients for syphilis.
- In January, DSTDP published [Sexually Transmitted Infections Surveillance, 2022](#), the latest look at nationally notifiable STIs in the U.S. The report underscored that, with more than 2.5 million cases in 2022, STIs must be a public health priority. The Division simultaneously published its [syphilis supplement](#), which provides trends in surveillance data on selected behaviors reported among primary and secondary syphilis cases in the United States during 2018-2022.
- In January, CDC/DSTDP [promoted](#) FDA's announcement about the [availability of Extencilline](#) to address the [ongoing shortages of Bicillin L-A®](#).
- In November, the Division also [announced](#) the selection of a new Deputy Division Director and an Associate Director for Health Equity.
- In November, Dr. Laura Bachmann stepped in as acting Division Director, following Dr. Leandro Mena's departure. CDC is actively working toward recruiting a new Division Director.
- In November, CDC/DSTDP published [Vital Signs: Missed Opportunities for Preventing Congenital Syphilis — United States, 2022](#), which called attention to the dramatic increases in congenital syphilis in

the previous decade and highlighted opportunities for prevention intervention.

- This work - and the subsequent 2022 STI Surveillance Report - were [further promoted](#) by the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS') National Syphilis and Congenital Syphilis Syndemic (NSCSS) Federal Task Force, of which many DSTDP staff are engaged.
- Stay up-to-date on the latest news from DSTDP by visiting the Division's [What's New page](#).

### From IUSTI-Canada



#### IUSTI-Canada

- IUSTI-Canada will work alongside the IUSTI-World Scholarship committee to arrange scholarship opportunities for 2025 STI & HIV World Congress to be held July 24-27, 2025 in Montreal, Canada.
- IUSTI-Canada continued to host its webinar series; recent speakers included:
  - Dr. Troy Grennan, speaking on ["Doxycycline for Bacterial STI Prevention – an Emerging Paradigm"](#) (September 20, 2023)
  - Dr. Karen Lithgow, speaking on ["Sexually Transmitted Infections and Preterm Birth"](#) (October 18, 2023)
  - Dr. Isaac Bogoch, speaking on ["HIV PEP-in-Pocket \("PIP"\) for Lower Frequency Exposures"](#) (November 20, 2023)
  - Dr. Nathan Lachowsky, speaking on ["Community-Based Mpox Responses and Monitoring among Two-Spirit, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Men and Non-Binary People Across Canada"](#) (January 24, 2024)
  - Dr. Santiago Perez Patrigeon, speaking on ["Curing HIV – How Close Are We?"](#) (February 7, 2024)
  - Recordings of these presentations are available on the IUSTI-Canada website.
- Organization planning is well underway for the 2025 ISSTDR IUSTI Congress, to be

held in Montreal, Quebec on July 24-27, 2025. Please mark your calendars for this exciting conference in a world-class city.



## From the American Sexual Health Association (ASHA)



- ASHA is funded by CDC through the grant Support Technical Assistance and Opportunities for Program, Policy, and Communications to Prevent STDs (STOP STDs). We are working in three priority areas: congenital syphilis, bacterial STI prevention, and Doxy-PEP.
- Produced, released, and promoted a cervical cancer awareness and education video featuring actor/activist Alysia Reiner (Orange is the New Black) and gynecologic surgeon Karen Tang, MD
- Took part in public health observations including World Sexual Health Day (September), Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month (September), World AIDS Day (December), Pansexual Pride Day (December), and Cervical Health Awareness Month (January). ASHA/NCCC are active on social media with each observation and offer relevant resources on our websites.
- In partnership with UC-Irvine and UCLA, we developed versions of the interactive patient education tool Understanding Cervical Cancer Screening in Dari, Arabic, and Pashto.
- Released new episodes of our Sex+Health podcast including a three-part series on sexual health and disability. Other episodes include a conversation with licensed marriage and family therapist, Kristal DeSantis, M.A., about men, relationships, and masculinity in the modern world.
- Served as co-sponsor and managing partner with the STI & HIV World Congress, July 2023 and the Contraceptive Technology Conference, September 2023. We are reprising our management role with the 2024 Contraceptive Technology Conference, for

which we recently launched the abstract and registration portals. ASHA is also co-sponsor and managing partner with the 2024 STI Prevention Conference.

- Produced a webinar Understanding and Reducing Stigma in Healthcare Settings. We launched a companion e-learning course for providers that explores stigma around STIs, the way bias and assumptions can impact patient care, and the importance of language choices to reduce stigma.
- Took part in public health observations including World Sexual Health Day (September), Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month (September), World AIDS Day (December), Pansexual Pride Day (December), and Cervical Health Awareness Month (January). ASHA/NCCC are active on social media with each observation and offer relevant resources on our websites.

*Brad Stoner*

## Conference Update

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

37<sup>th</sup> IUSTI Europe Congress  
11-14 September 2024

Zagreb, Croatia

<https://www.iustieurope2024.org/>

25<sup>th</sup> World IUSTI Congress 2024  
17 – 20 September 2024

Sydney, Australia

<https://www.iusti2024sydney.org/>

2025 ISSTD IUSTI Congress  
24-27 July 2025

Montreal, Canada

<https://stihiv2025.org>

38<sup>th</sup> IUSTI Europe Congress  
9-11 October 2025

Athens, Greece

*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.

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Further information on the activities of IUSTI available at

[www.iusti.org](http://www.iusti.org)