

STI Global Update

Newsletter of the International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections

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President's Letter



Prof Christopher Fairley - President of IUSTI

Dear Colleagues and IUSTI Members,

I trust those in the Northern Hemisphere are looking forward to a well-earned break soon. For those of us in the South, we're settling down to a winter of work.

Let me start by thanking all those who have been working hard to make the fast-approaching 2026 IUSTI World Congress a success in Prague between the 14-17th of October. Many of those I mentioned last month have been working hard to prepare an excellent program for you. Please check out the conference web site and make your bookings soon.

<https://iustiprague2026.gcon.me/page/home>

The IUSTI officers have agreed to provide (by default) 20,000 euros to each of the World IUSTI meetings and combined ISSTD/IUSTI meetings. This will support funds for junior members to attend these meetings and learn from and network with others.

The planning for the 2027 ISSTD and IUSTI STI&HIV World congress that will be held between the 21st and 24th of October in New Delhi is progressing well. Bobbie Van Der Pol and Ismail Maatouk are now working with their track chairs and members to develop the plenary and symposium program. Invitations will go out shortly for suggestions for possibly symposia.

I wanted to report on the progress towards a potential merger of IUSTI and ISSTD. I outlined the rational and relevant history in the previous newsletters so I will describe the progress since then.

The merger committee has made good progress with the four documents that would form the basis for a merger. These included the structure of the new merged body, the structure of the conference organising committee, how funds would be handled and the culture of the new organization. At the last merger committee on the 28/29th of May members discussed concerns that had been raised over the last few months about the timelines for a potential merger being too short to allow enough time for adequate consideration of the key issues. The committee has therefore reviewed its aims and timelines and decided to develop a MOU between IUSTI and ISSTD that includes options for a future merger that may proceed in stages before a final merger occurs. The merger committee

will await feedback from the board of ISSTD who will meet in late June. The merger committee will meet again in July.

Conference organisation involves a lot of work and is extremely stressful. If you talk to anyone who has been chair of a conference, I imagine they will tell you the same thing but with more gory details. But conferences are IUSTI's main income stream and it is important that they are done well and with the greatest chance of a profit as possible. I wonder sometimes whether the inexperience of people like me has led to some professional conference organisations (not all) taking advantage of our inexperience and lessening what we might have learnt from the conference. This is only my view. Therefore, IUSTI and ISSTD have decided to work together and develop a detailed document about running a conference that includes dealing with the PCO and other outside organisations. Bobbie Van Der Pol has agreed to chair this committee with my help. We are in the early stages of progressing this work and will report more in the future.

Christopher Fairley, IUSTI-World President

In Memoriam: Dr. Ronald Campbell Ballard (1946-2026)



It is with immense sadness that the International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections (IUSTI) shares news with colleagues, in all our IUSTI regions, concerning the passing of Ron Ballard at the end of March this year.

Ron was born in London, UK, and undertook his early education at Latymer Upper School in Hammersmith. After attaining an M.I.Biol. in Biochemistry at the Polytechnic of the South Bank, he commenced work as a Technician at the Medical Research Council's Trachoma Research Unit at the Lister Institute of Preventative Medicine in London.

After eight years working at this facility, during which he was promoted to Senior Technician and then Research Assistant, Ron moved to South Africa in 1974 to take up the role of Senior Scientific Officer, and subsequently Chief Scientific Officer, at the Department of Medical Microbiology within the School of Pathology at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, where he was appointed as Head of the Oculo-Genital Diseases Research Laboratory within the South African Institute for Medical Research (SAIMR). Ron obtained his PhD from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1982; his thesis focused on the epidemiology and immunopathology of chlamydial infections in Southern Africa. He subsequently became an Associate Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand.

This period in his career nurtured Ron's interest in sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and his passion to do something to improve sexual healthcare on the African continent. Ron founded and was the inaugural President of the STD Society of Southern Africa as well as Editor of the Society's journal, The Southern African Journal of STDs. Ron also served as an Associate Editor for the Southern African Journal of Epidemiology and Infection, later renamed the Southern African Journal of Infectious Diseases. Ron organized and chaired the 1st International Congress on STDs in South Africa in 1983. In 1999, Ron chaired a successful IUSTI World Congress on Sexually Transmitted Infections in Sun City, South Africa; this was the first time IUSTI had held a World Congress on the African continent. Ron regularly provided expert advice on STD

control to the South African Department of Health.

Elsewhere on the African continent, Ron undertook a variety of expert and educational endeavours in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, and Eswatini (formerly, Swaziland).

Ron moved back temporarily to St. Albans in the UK. from 1986 to 1989, where he accepted the position of Senior Scientific Officer at Farmitalia Carlo Erba Ltd.. His work focused on the development of antibiotics and the provision of expert advice to the company on tropical infections. During this period, Ron had a part-time appointment to the scientific staff of the British Medical Council's Division of STDs at the Clinical Research Centre in Harrow; he also undertook teaching as an honorary lecturer at St. Mary's Hospital, London, for the Diploma in Venereology of the UK's Postgraduate Medical Federation.

In 1989, Ron returned to Johannesburg to assume the position of Associate Professor and Head of the STD Research Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand's Department of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases within the School of Pathology and the SAIMR. In 1993, Ron became the inaugural Director of the newly created National Reference Centre for STDs established at the SAIMR and the University of the Witwatersrand. During the following eight years, Ron published a large number of peer-reviewed articles on genital ulceration and genital discharges in general, with a special interest in chancroid, syphilis, gonorrhoea, and chlamydial infections, including lymphogranuloma venereum. During this time, Ron witnessed at firsthand the emergence of the South Africa's HIV epidemic and the epidemiological synergy that exists between HIV and sexually transmitted co-infections. He became a champion for improving STD control and patient care through the introduction of STD syndromic management. Ron participated

in several important studies on novel diagnostics for STIs, for example the use of a molecular multiplex assay for genital ulcers to compare clinical diagnosis and laboratory-based diagnosis of genital ulcers in Lesotho, undertaken in collaboration with Stephen Morse and Karina Orle from United States (US) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). With Richard Steen, Ron contributed to public health research highlighting the benefit of azithromycin, given as monthly periodic presumptive therapy, in reducing STD prevalence in both treated female sex workers and untreated male mine workers working in nearby mines within South Africa.

Ron left South Africa in 2001 and moved to the US CDC to work as Branch Chief in the Syphilis and Chlamydia branch (2001-2003) and then Branch Chief in the Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Branch, within the Division of AIDS, STDs, and TB Laboratory Research at the National Centre for Infectious Diseases. In 2010, Ron started the position of Associate Director for Laboratory Science at the CDC's Centre for Global Health where he worked until his retirement in 2015.

The truth is that Ron never really retired. On leaving the CDC, he functioned as a Consultant to the World Health Organization (WHO) on STDs and neglected tropical diseases. In his final years, Ron advised, supported, and co-edited the large volume of work that has emanated from WHO's PROSPERO network which undertook independent clinic-based and clinic-utility evaluations of point-of-care tests for STIs in over 17,000 patients at 30 sites within fifteen countries (<https://bmcinfectdis.biomedcentral.com/articles/supplements/volume-24-supplement-1>).

Internationally, Ron was a member of several societies, including the Executive Committee of the African Union against Venereal Diseases and Treponematoses. Ron subsequently served as the IUSTI-World Secretary General (1999-2003) and was a longstanding member

of the IUSTI-World Executive Committee (1997-2003). Ron also served a six-year term on the Board of the International Society for STD Research (ISSTD, 1995-2001) and a two-year term on the Board of the American STD Association (ASTDA, 2003-2005).

Ron worked closely with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and WHO for decades. He was a regular participant in meetings convened by these organizations, providing research evidence that contributed to the updating of the UNAIDS and WHO policies and strategies for the prevention and control of STIs. Ron served as a member of the WHO Director-General's Advisory Panel on STIs for 10 years (2004-2014). He was also instrumental in the first field testing of the dual nonspecific/specific treponemal rapid tests for syphilis. He contributed to the elaboration of STI surveillance guidance and laboratory support for improving surveillance systems for STIs (2008) and strategic responses to the threat of untreatable *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* and the emergence of cephalosporin-resistant *N. gonorrhoeae* (2010). Together with Magnus Unemo, Cathy Ison, Rosanna Peeling and both of us, Ron co-edited and co-wrote chapters for the 2013 WHO manual of 'Laboratory Diagnosis of STIs, including HIV'.

Ron's legacy will live on through the contributions he made to improve sexual health care in many parts of the world, particularly in southern Africa. As one of the world's leading educators and researchers in the field of STIs and HIV infection, Ron nurtured both scientists and clinicians in their early careers and supervised a substantial number postgraduate MSc and PhD students. Both authors of this IUSTI Tribute worked closely with Ron and will be forever grateful for support and wisdom they received from him during their careers.

As we reflect on Ron's lifetime achievements, our thoughts now rest with Joan, Ron's loving

wife, and Ron's son, Stuart, and his family at this time of bereavement.

Rest in peace, Ron.

David Lewis and Francis Ndowa, IUSTI-World Strategic Advisers

News

Congratulations to **Valeska Padovese** who has been awarded an ILDS Humanitarian certificate of appreciation for 2026 and to **Somesh Gupta** who has been awarded an ILDS International Leadership Certificate of Appreciation for 2026.

Regional Reports

Africa MENA



Dr Sara Lowe – Regional Director of IUSTI-Africa MENA

IUSTI Africa Mena webinar series

The IUSTI Africa MENA region, in partnership with the Foundation for Professional Development, recently hosted its highly successful second regional webinar. The event drew an overwhelming response, bringing together over 150 healthcare professionals from across the region. The highlight of the event was an impactful presentation by Dr Tendesayi Kufa-Chakezha who delivered crucial insights into the clinical challenges, prevention strategies, and management of congenital syphilis—a critical public health priority for the region. Building on this incredible momentum, the committee is already hard at work planning two future webinars for the remainder of the

year. Stay tuned for official dates and speaker announcements coming to your inbox soon.

STI Advocacy Hubs launched for Zimbabwe, South Africa and Kenya

AVAC and partners recently launched STI Advocacy Hubs and unveiled country-led advocacy agendas for Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe. With contributions from Lori Newman, Teodora Wi and country partners, the launch event highlighted the urgent need to strengthen STI prevention, diagnostics and care, while positioning the new agendas as a platform for stronger policy attention, investment and regional collaboration. Developed through cross-country partnership, the agendas identify shared priorities for STI surveillance, diagnostics, workforce capacity strengthening and future prevention tools, helping build a coordinated STI advocacy movement across East and Southern Africa.

<https://avac.org/event/launching-sti-advocacy-hubs-nation/>

<https://www.stiwatch.org/regional-advocacy/>

Recent Regional Publications

1. *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* Prevalence in Sub-Saharan Africa

A study conducted by the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Group at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar systematically reviewed and analyzed *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* (NG) prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa between 1964 and 2025. Published in *PLOS Medicine*, the study by Osman et al., titled “Prevalence and epidemiological patterns of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* infection in sub-Saharan Africa, 1964–2025: systematic review, meta-analyses, and meta-regressions,” identified 950 publications contributing 1,604 prevalence measures. The study found that NG prevalence remains markedly high in the region, with substantial variation by population type, anatomical site, clinical manifestation, subregion, and age. These findings underscore the need for strengthened surveillance, expanded prevention and diagnostic strategies, targeted sexual health

programming, and continued monitoring of gonococcal antimicrobial resistance.

Osman A, Akram H, Alemrayat B, Al-Maraghi S, Harfouche M, Abu-Raddad LJ. Prevalence and epidemiological patterns of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* infection in sub-Saharan Africa, 1964–2025: systematic review, meta-analyses, and meta-regressions. *PLoS Med*. 2026 Jun 23;23(6)

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42335017/>

2. HIV Transmission Dynamics in Morocco

A national study conducted through collaboration between the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Group at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar, the Morocco Ministry of Health and Social Protection, UNAIDS, and the WHO Collaborating Centre for HIV Strategic Information at the University of Zagreb analyzed national and regional HIV transmission dynamics in Morocco. Published in *The Lancet HIV*, the study by Chemaitelly et al., titled “National and regional analysis of HIV transmission dynamics in Morocco: a mathematical modelling study,” used mathematical modeling and national epidemiological data to characterize the populations and regions contributing most to ongoing HIV transmission. The study provides evidence to support precision HIV prevention, strategic planning, resource allocation, and targeted programming in Morocco and other settings with concentrated HIV epidemics.

Chemaitelly H, Khoudri I, El Kettani A, et al. National and regional analysis of HIV transmission dynamics in Morocco: a mathematical modelling study. *Lancet HIV*. 2026 Jun 10:S2352-3018(26)00054-8. doi:10.1016/S2352-3018(26)00054-8.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42269665/>

3. Majaha M, Mwaturura T, Machinga F et al. Evaluation of the diagnostic performance of the Eazyplex platform for detection of *Chlamydia trachomatis* and *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* among women in Zimbabwe.

Sex Transm Infect. 2026 Mar 9;sextrans-2025-056793. doi: 10.1136/sextrans-2025-056793. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41802838.

Link:

<https://sti.bmj.com/content/early/2026/03/09/sextrans-2025-056793>

4. Mdingi MM, Gigi RMS, Jung H, *et al.* **SpiroTact and VIPER technology: a promising rapid point-of-care test for active syphilis.**

Sexually Transmitted Infections Published Online First: 22 April 2026. doi: 10.1136/sextrans-2025-056901
<https://doi.org/10.1136/sextrans-2025-056901>

5. Karumazondo, J., Bernays et al. **Biomedical technologies in context: Acceptability of a screening tool for sexually transmitted infections and bacterial vaginosis in Zimbabwe and South Africa.**

Global Public Health, 21(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2026.2657149>

Sara Lowe

Latin America



Prof Angelica Espinosa Miranda— Regional Director of IUSTI-Latin America

IUSTI Latin America Members Contribute to the STI Symposium at the Congress of Infectious Diseases Society in Rio de Janeiro.



Four members of IUSTI Latin America participated in the symposium “STIs in 2026: Diagnostic Challenges and Essential Updates” during the 10th *Infecto Rio* Congress, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 10–12 June 2026.

The session, moderated by Prof. Mauro Romero Leal Passos and Dr. Marcos Davi Gomes de Sousa, addressed key topics including screening for asymptomatic STIs, emerging sexually transmitted pathogens, management of persistent serologic responses after syphilis treatment, and anal sexual health.



Presentations were delivered by Dr. Felipe Sabec Folgueral, Dr. Mayara Secco, Dr. Marcos Davi Gomes de Sousa, and Dr. Maria Roberta Meneguetti. The event also featured a cultural activity led by Prof. Passos, with a dramatized reading of “*O Castigo*”, by Nelson Rodrigues, highlighting the historical and symbolic role of syphilis in Brazilian literature. The participation of IUSTI Latin America members reflected the organization’s ongoing commitment to advancing STI education, regional collaboration, and the integration of science, clinical practice, and culture in sexual health across Latin America.



Photo: Roberta Meneguetti

Technical Visit to the Örebro University STI Reference Laboratory Strengthens Regional Collaboration on Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance

Members of IUSTI Latin America from Brazil and Peru participated in a technical visit to the laboratory of Dr. Magnus Unemo at Örebro

University, Sweden, an internationally recognized reference center for antimicrobial resistance surveillance in sexually transmitted infections. The visit provided an opportunity to learn about the laboratory infrastructure, methodologies used for *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* antimicrobial resistance surveillance, and quality assurance strategies implemented by centers of excellence.



Discussions focused on laboratory standardization, interpretation of susceptibility testing results, integration with clinical management, and the use of surveillance data to support evidence-based public health policies. The exchange of experiences contributed to the ongoing implementation of the Etest methodology within the Brazilian gonococcal antimicrobial resistance surveillance network, reinforcing regional collaboration and strengthening capacity for laboratory quality improvement and antimicrobial stewardship across Latin America.



Photo: Pamela Gaspar

Paraguay Advances Innovation, Public Health, and Artificial Intelligence for HIV and STI Prevention

The launch of *Angirũ Bot*, a Paraguayan artificial intelligence-based tool designed to provide reliable information on HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI), represents an important milestone for public health in the country. Funded by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT), the initiative is led by Dr. Gloria Aguilar, Principal Investigator of the project and IUSTI representative in Paraguay. *Angirũ Bot* aims to deliver clear, accessible, and evidence-based information to the population, particularly adolescents and young people, supporting HIV and STI prevention, timely testing, treatment adherence, and efforts to reduce HIV-related stigma.



Photo: Gloria Aguilar

Angelica Espinosa Miranda

Europe



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

27th IUSTI World and 39th IUSTI Europe Joint Congress, Prague October 14-17, 2026



The Congress Presidents Jana Tresnak Hercogova and Christopher Fairley extend a cordial invitation to attend the IUSTI World Congress in Prague.

The Scientific Committee chairs Dr Janneke Heijne (Amsterdam, NL) and Dr Andy Winter (Glasgow, UK) are delighted to be leading a strong international scientific committee underpinning the meeting. The meeting will open on Weds 14th late afternoon with the scientific programme running for 2.5 days Thurs 15 Oct through to Sat 17 Oct lunchtime

Update IUSTI World and Europe Congress, Prague, Oct 2026

Andy Winter (Chair of the international Scientific committee)

We look forward to welcoming delegates to our upcoming [Congress](#), with nearly 100 invited speakers and facilitators due to deliver a range of plenary, symposium and workshop sessions. We have had over 450 abstract submissions and over 350 delegates have already registered. You can explore the [detailed programme](#) here. Standard registration rates are held to 31 August so please register soon if you have not done so: Prague is a wonderful city and you will have an unforgettable time with many colleagues from around the world. You can follow the meeting on Instagram at @iusteworldcongress and sign up for email updates on the Congress website.

Celebrating Excellence and Supporting the Next Generation at the IUSTI Europe Congress *Raj Patel and Airi Poder (Task force for honours and awards)*

This year's IUSTI Europe Congress has placed a strong emphasis on recognising excellence

while investing in the future of our specialty. We are delighted to celebrate the recipients of the Rising Star Award, the Best Oral Presentation Award, the Best Poster Award, and the Undergraduate Prize. These awards acknowledge outstanding scientific achievement, innovation, and dedication, while highlighting the exceptional talent emerging across the field of sexually transmitted infections and sexual health.

The Rising Star Award recognises a mid-career professional who has already made a significant contribution through research, clinical practice, education, or leadership. The Best Oral and Best Poster awards showcase the high standard of scientific work presented at the congress, rewarding clear communication, rigorous methodology, and research with the potential to improve patient care. The Undergraduate Prize encourages medical students to engage with sexual health research early in their careers, helping to inspire the next generation of clinicians and researchers.

Perhaps the most significant achievement this year has been our commitment to supporting early-career participation. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and the dedication of the organising committee, we have awarded a record number of scholarships, enabling more young doctors and researchers than ever before to attend the congress. These scholarships reduce financial barriers and provide invaluable opportunities to present research, learn from international experts, build professional networks, and develop collaborations that will shape future careers.

By recognising excellence and expanding access to the congress, IUSTI Europe continues to nurture emerging talent and strengthen the future of sexual health across Europe. We congratulate all award winners and scholarship recipients and look forward to seeing the lasting impact of their contributions in the years ahead.

Advanced Course of IUSTI Europe at the IUSTI World Conference

Prague, 14 October 2026

Angelika Stary and Marco Cusini (Chairs for Education)

As every year, IUSTI Europe is organizing its Advanced Course on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), which has become a well-established part of the annual IUSTI Europe and IUSTI World conferences, taking place on the day of the Opening Ceremony.

The Advanced Course has consistently attracted a large audience and offers an engaging programme focused on current and emerging topics in STI diagnosis and management. Presentations are delivered by leading regional and international experts, combining the latest scientific updates with practical, clinically relevant information.

The course is particularly valuable for early-career professionals, who may also apply for scholarships to support their participation in both the Advanced Course and the IUSTI World Conference. Participation, however, is open to everyone—there is no age limit. The 2026 edition of the IUSTI Europe Advanced Course will be held in Prague on Wednesday, 14 October 2026, at the beginning of the IUSTI World Conference. This year's programme, available on the conference website, is entitled "Living in the Golden Age of STI Diagnosis?" and will provide an update on the latest advances and innovations in STI diagnostics.

We look forward to welcoming many participants to Prague for this exciting educational event.

Living in the Golden Age of STI Diagnosis?

Programme

08.00 Registration

08.20 Welcome by Marco Cusini (Italy), Angelika Stary (Austria)

Session 1 Chairs: George S Tiplica, Eija Hiltunen-Back

08.30 – 08.50 Down under: an Austrian Roller Coaster of STIs

Birgit Sadoghi (Austria)

08.50 – 09.20 Are we living in the golden age of STI diagnosis?

Tom Quinn (USA)

09.20 – 09.50 Chlamydia diagnosis: the most modern technologies

John White (UK)

09.50 - 10.15 *N. gonorrhoeae* and *M. genitalium*: diagnostic and treatment strategies to manage antimicrobial resistant strains

Jorgen Skov Jensen (Denmark), David Lewis (Australia)

10.15 -10.30 Coffee break

Session 2 Chairs: Derek Freedman, Mihail Gomberg

10.30 – 11.00 HPV Testing in men using NAATs: when and why it matters?

Mihael Skerlev (Croatia)

11.00 – 11.30 Syphilis diagnosis: a new update

Khalil Ghanem (USA)

11.30-12.00 Genital ulcers: is it always an STI?

Stefano Ramoni (Italy)

12.00-13.15 Lunch Session (Lunch packages offered by COPAN)

Chair Henry De Vries

12.10 – 12.40 How far are we worldwide with point of care tests?

Charlotte Gaydos (USA)

12.45 – 13.15 Innovative solutions to expanding STI testing access

Barbara van der Pol (USA) (Sponsored By Copan)

Session 3 Chairs : Raj Patel, Airi Poder

13.15 – 13.45 A Pro and Contra discussion from 2 experts: Stopping asymptomatic screening in sexual health is madness

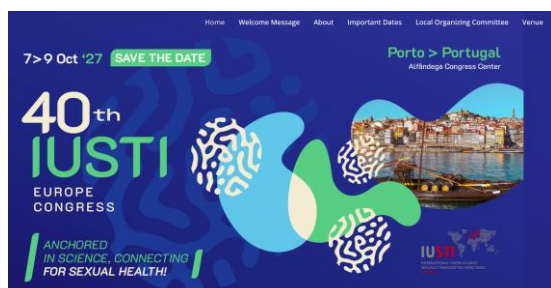
Peter Greenhouse (UK), Colm Mahony (UK)

13.45-14.30 Diagnostic nuts to break

Andy Winter and course participants present interesting cases of STI

Looking Ahead: IUSTI-Europe Congress 2027 in Porto

The 40th IUSTI-Europe Congress 2027 will be held in Porto, Portugal, from 7–9 October 2027 in the Alfandega Congress Center (<https://iusti2027.com/>).



The Congress will be hosted under the leadership of Congress President Carmen Lisboa, with Georg Stary serving as International Scientific Chair. Together with the local organising and scientific committees and IUSTI-Europe, they will continue the tradition of delivering a high-quality scientific programme covering the latest advances in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and public health aspects of sexually transmitted infections.

Preparations are already underway, with the local organising team working closely with IUSTI-Europe to develop an engaging scientific programme and an excellent congress experience for delegates from across Europe and beyond. Porto, one of Portugal's most historic and vibrant cities, will provide an outstanding setting for scientific exchange, collaboration, and networking.

Further information on the scientific programme, abstract submission, registration, and key dates will be announced in due course. The organizing team looks forward to welcoming the international STI community to Porto in October 2027.

Looking Further Ahead: IUSTI-Europe Congress 2028

During the recent IUSTI-Europe Council Meeting in June, the Council voted to select

Antwerp, Belgium, as the host city for the IUSTI-Europe Congress 2028. The Congress Presidents will be Chris Kenyon and Vanaelen Thibault.

Preparations for the Congress will commence in due course in close collaboration between the local organising team and IUSTI-Europe. Further information on the Congress organisation, scientific programme, and key dates will be shared as planning progresses.

We congratulate the Antwerp team and look forward to working together towards another successful IUSTI-Europe Congress in 2028.

IUSTI Europe Webinars 25-26

Derek Freedman and George-Sorin Tiplica

The IUSTI Europe Webinar Series for 25-26 started in October with 'Highlights from Athens' featuring some of the outstanding presentations from the IUSTI Europe Congress and presented by Prof Electra Nicolaidou and the Chair of the Scientific Committee, Prof George Sorin Tiplica. The series finished in April with 'Bridges from Prague' presented by Profs Jana Tresnak Hercogova and Christopher Fairley the IUSTI World Congress Presidents as a foretaste as to what to expect when we meet in October in Prague, which included presentations by the Chairs of the Scientific Committee for Prague, Andrew Winter and Jenneke Heijne. There was a total attendance of over 1200 from a wide range of countries. The Webinars were detailed in the March 26 STI Global Update IUSTI Newsletter

Athens Highlights	
Wednesday 29th October 2025	Attendance 187
Celebrating the Fight against HIV	
Wednesday 26 November 2025	Attendance 205
Montreal Highlights	
Wednesday 28 January 2026	Attendance 221
Challenging STI Cases	
Wednesday 25 February 2026	Attendance 262
The Lions from the Waiting Room	
Wednesday 26 March 2025	Attendance 179
Bridges of Prague	
Wednesday 29 April 2026	Attendance 180
Total Attendance 2025-26 - 1234	

Planning is starting for the next series of Webinars, running from October 26 to April 27. We welcome suggestions for themes, topics and speaker, especially from countries and areas which have not contributed before. Clinic practice topics engage the most interest, but they are based on research, so we wish to present a broad spectrum of activity and needs in our field.

All recordings remain freely available at <https://www.iusti-europe.eu/web/index.php/webinar-recordings>. The series continues to combine excellent speakers with practical focus, making it a valuable, accessible resource worldwide.

IUSTI-Europe – EADV: Strengthening the Dermatovenereology Alliance in 2026

George-Sorin Tiplica (Chair of the Council)

Europe is facing an unprecedented surge in sexually transmitted infections. According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, gonorrhoea cases across the EU/EEA reached 106,331 in 2024 — a 303% increase since 2015 — while syphilis cases more than doubled over the same period, reaching 45,577. Congenital syphilis nearly doubled in a single year. Against this alarming epidemiological backdrop, the formal alliance between the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) and the International Union Against Sexually Transmitted Infections – Europe (IUSTI-Europe) has never been more timely or necessary.

From January 2025 the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the two organizations formalised their shared commitment to advancing continuous medical education, fostering research, and advocating for improved STI prevention and care across Europe and beyond. Dermatologists and venereologists stand at the front line of STI diagnosis and management. By uniting EADV's broad dermatological platform with IUSTI-Europe's deep STI expertise, this collaboration

ensures that clinicians receive rigorous, up-to-date scientific guidance, while raising the profile of sexual health as an integral component of dermatovenereology practice.

Building directly on the MoU, a new joint EADV–IUSTI-EU Session on Venereology was held on Saturday, 9 May 2026, within the prestigious "What's New" track of the EADV Spring Symposium in Athens. Co-chaired by Professor Branka Marinović, President of EADV (Croatia), and Professor George-Sorin Tiplica, Chair of IUSTI-Europe Council (Romania), the session attracted a large and engaged audience and delivered four outstanding scientific contributions.

Professor Electra Nicolaidou (Athens, Greece) opened with a presentation on the diagnostic complexity of syphilis under the evocative title "Is it syphilis?" illustrating through clinical cases the surname of syphilis as the "great imitator". Dr. Hana Zakoucká (Prague, Czech Republic) addressed "PCR in syphilis diagnosis", demonstrating that PCR from lesion swabs is useful in the diagnosis of primary syphilis. Dr. Carmen Lisboa (Porto, Portugal — President-elect of the 2027 IUSTI-Europe Congress in Porto) addressed "The neglected balanitis", underlying the carcinogenic aspect in cases of chronic balanitis. Professor George-Sorin Tiplica closed the session with "The clap chronicles: Mutation, resistance and regret", highlighting the asymptomatic pharyngeal and rectal reservoirs as drivers of silent transmission and revealed the importance of the culture-based surveillance and novel first-in-class antimicrobials for gonorrhoea treatment (Photo 1).

The scientific partnership continues to grow at the 27th IUSTI World Congress, to be held in Prague, Czech Republic, 14–17 October 2026 where the dedicated EADV–IUSTI Europe Symposium will place a Spotlight on Suppuration in the Genito-Anal Region. The session will be chaired by the leaders of the

EADV: Professor Branka Marinović (Croatia) and Professor Marie Aleth Richard (France) together with Professor George-Sorin Tiplica as a representation of the inter-organisational commitment.

The scientific programme spans the full spectrum of suppurative genito-anal pathology. Professor Kieron Leslie (USA) will address "Klebsiella Folliculitis in MSM", an emerging and underrecognised infectious entity. Dr. Usha Hartgill (Norway) will present on "Hidradenitis Suppurativa: identification, staging and treatment strategies", followed by Professor Marie Aleth Richard (France) discussing "New clinical presentations in Hidradenitis Suppurativa". Professor Electra Nicolaidou (Greece) will round out the session with "Treatment pearls on genital herpes", translating current evidence into practical clinical guidance. Delegates are strongly encouraged to attend and to register at www.iustiprague2026.com. This joint symposium represents a landmark opportunity to witness, first-hand, the combined scientific excellence of EADV and IUSTI-Europe.



From left to right: Dr. Hana Zakoucká (Czech Republic), Prof. Carmen Lisboa (Portugal — President of the 2027 IUSTI-Europe Congress in Porto), Prof. Branka Marinovic (Croatia, EADV President), Prof. Electra Nicolaidou (Greece), Dr. Valeska Padovese (Malta - recipient of the ILDS award 2026), Prof. George-Sorin Tiplica (Romania — IUSTI-Europe Council Chair)

Report from IUSTI Russia

Mikhael Gomberg (Task force for National Associations)

The activity of the "Guild of Specialists in STI "IUSTI-Ru" was based on 2 projects: Forums

named "Les Liaisons dangereuses" after the famous novel of Choderlos de Laclos. These forums were performed on site by specialists from Moscow (including myself), and with participation of the local opinion leaders. The online activity of the Guild was named "IUSTI-Ru School". During both activities the translation for the whole region was organised.

Both projects were performed in different regions of Russia. During both activities it was not only for the doctors from the cities named, but the translation on the whole regions was organised. The leading specialists in STI, mostly dermatovenereologists and gynecologists from regions participated in these projects.

Online IUSTI-Ru Schools in the 1-st half of 2026 were performed in the following Russian regions: Yaroslavl (5.02.2026), Perm (26.02), Saratov (18.03), St.Petersbourg (9.04), Yekaterinburg (29.04), Kazan (21.05), Arkhangelsk (9.04). In the 2-nd half of 2025 these online conference of the School were performed: Samara (16.09.2025), Tumen (6.10), Omsk (16.10), Vladikavkaz (27.11), Irkutsk (9.12), Moscow (18.12).

Activity of Forums "Les Liaisons dangereuses" were performed in these regions: the 2-nd half of 2025: Khabarovsk (20.09.2025), Omsk (1.10), Samara (17.10), Ryazan (7.10), Penza (14.11). At the end of the year 2025 the final Congress of the "Guild of Specialists in STI "IUSTI-Ru" was performed on 5.12.2025 in St.Petersbourg at the Otta Institute of Gynecology with participation of the leading local specialists.

In the 1st half of 2026 Forums "Les Liaisons dangereuses" were performed in Vologda (30.01. 2026), Tver (13.02), Surgut (3.04), Astrakhan (24.04), Tomsk (3.06), Kemerovo (5.06). For the 2nd part of 2026 plans are to organize Forums in Yekaterinburg (9.10), Murmansk (30.12), Yaroslavl (11.12), and the

last Congress of the year is planned in Kazan 04.12.2026.

Sexual Health in Europe: Key Updates

Andy Winter (Chair for Communication)

Bacterial STIs reach record highs in Europe

Notifications of gonorrhoea, syphilis and congenital syphilis reached highest levels in a decade, according to the [latest data](#) published by ECDC on 21 May. In 2024 there were 106,331 gonorrhoea diagnoses, over triple that reported in 2015. There were also 3,490 reports of lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV). Among 14 countries reporting, congenital syphilis numbers jumped to 140 in 2024 from 78 in 2023, with only half the countries surveyed having a policy to re-test women later in pregnancy which [ECDC recommends](#). The data are sadly not surprising given the significant gaps in testing and prevention policies highlighted in an [ECDC report](#) published in December 2025.

IUSTI Europe has a critical role in supporting local country representatives to engage policy leaders within their health systems to reverse this rise, removing barriers to testing such as requiring parental consent and out-of-pocket costs for basic STI testing.

Implementation guidance for BBV screening in Emergency Departments - Public Consultation

Public consultation is open on the draft EuroTEST Practical Implementation Guidance for Blood borne Virus (BBV) opt-out testing in Emergency Departments (EDs) in Europe. This was developed by an advisory group with Deniz Gökengin representing IUSTI Europe.

Full details including the [guidance document](#) and response form is available at eurotest.org/projects-collaborations/implementation-guidance-for-bbv-screening-in-ed/. Consultation closes on 26 July 2026.

Opt-out testing in NHS England has been shown to be cost effective, according to a recent [study](#) published in Lancet HIV, with

[evaluation](#) showing nearly 2000 people were found to have previously unrecognised HIV in the first four years of the large-scale programme.

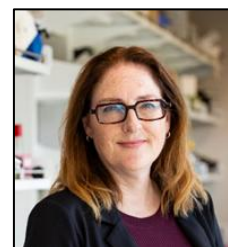
HPV Prevention Policy Atlas

The [HPV Prevention Policy Atlas](#) is a research project led by the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, jointly with the European Cancer Organisation. It scores 48 countries across geographical Europe on prevention policies for cervical cancer. In a rare bit of good news for sexual health they note significant policy improvements across WHO Europe since 2023, although uptake and implementation gaps remain.

<https://hpv.srhrpolicyhub.org/region/?region=eu>

Claudia Heller-Vitouch

North America



Dr Caroline Cameron – Regional Director of IUSTI-North America

From the American STD Association (ASTDA)



- Congratulations to the new Editor-in-Chief of *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, three newly elected members of the ASTDA Board of Directors, and recipients of the 2026 ASTDA recognition awards!

- Dr. Barbara (Bobbie) Van Der Pol became the new Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Sexually Transmitted Diseases* in June 2026.



- Three new members of the ASTDA Board of Directors were elected in Spring of 2026 and will join the Board in the fall: Stacey Griner; Barbara Wilgus; and Jason Zucker.



- The recipients of the 2026 ASTDA recognition awards are Dr. Carolyn Deal, PhD - Distinguished Career Award; Dr. Christina Muzny, MD, MPH - Achievement Award; and Dr. Jason Zucker, MD, MS- Early Career Professional; Mr. Robert Kohn, MPH - Jack N. Spencer Award. ASTDA will hold an awards luncheon at the 2026 STI Prevention Conference to honor these outstanding awardees.



- We are soliciting for applications for ASTDA Small Project Assistance Program, due 7/1: <https://astda.org/engage/small-project-assistance/>
- The ASTDA will hold a pre-conference symposium for Early Career Professionals and a gathering for Midcareer Professionals at the 2026 STI Prevention Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

From IUSTI-Canada



IUSTI Canada Leadership Transition and Board news.

Dr Cameron transitions to Past President, IUSTI Canada:

- Dr. Caroline Cameron completed her term as the IUSTI Canada President.

Under Dr. Cameron's leadership, IUSTI Canada continued its successful webinar program, launched a new website, and developed the scholarship fund that provides financial assistance for scholars to attend IUSTI-World and ISSTD/IUSTI-World joint (STI & HIV World Congress) meetings.

IUSTI Canada thanks Dr Cameron for her leadership and values her support of its mission.

Leadership transitions at IUSTI Canada:

- Dr Nitika (Nikki) Pant Pai joins as President, and Dr Karen Lithgow joins as Vice President); July 1, 2026- IUSTI Canada hosted our Annual General Meeting on June 5th and welcomed Dr. Nitika (Nikki) Pant Pai as the new

President. She is a tenured full Professor at McGill University.



- IUSTI Canada welcomes Dr. Karen Lithgow as the new Vice-President of IUSTI Canada. She is an Assistant Professor at Dalhousie University.



- IUSTI Welcomes New Board Members:
 - Dr. Preeti Pathela (ASTDA Vice President & Ex-Officio Voting Member), Executive Director, NYC Health Department.
 - Dr. Helena Petrosova (membership coordinator), Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Victoria, BC
 - Two open positions on the IUSTI board: IUSTI Canada has two open positions for treasurer and for early-career member at large. Membership applications are being entertained.

Find out more about the board at IUSTI Canada. Visit [Meet the Team — IUSTI-Canada: https://www.iusti-canada.ca/meet-the-team](https://www.iusti-canada.ca/meet-the-team)

Activities of IUSTI Canada:

1. The Launch of a New Mentorship Program: Can-STIMM:

- IUSTI-Canada is launching a mentorship program – Our new Canadian STI Mentorship & Knowledge Mobilization (Can-STIMM) Program will match early career professionals with senior STI researchers in Canada. Mentee-mentor pairs will be featured on the IUSTI Canada website and mentees will have the opportunity to present in our IUSTI Canada Webinar series and attend an IUSTI Canada symposium in Summer 2027. Find out more information about the program and application process at: <https://www.iusti-canada.ca/mentorship-program>

2. Continuation of our successful Webinar Series:

- IUSTI Canada's 2026 webinar series – please join us to hear exclusive webinars that explore cutting-edge research, community engagement and advocacy for STBBIs/STIs. More information and details about how to register can be found on the [IUSTI-Canada website](#).

3. Featuring a popular Podcast:

- New podcast episode from Everybody Hates Me: Let's Talk About Stigma. Hosted by Dr. Carmen Logie, IUSTI Canada Member-at-Large featuring an interview with Dr. Tanya Sharpe on stigma and homicide violence, in particular its impacts on Black communities.

4. Scholarship support available from IUSTI Canada:

- IUSTI-Canada will continue to prioritize support for attendance of early career professionals at IUSTI-national and international meetings.

- Upcoming scholarship opportunities will support attendance at the three conferences:

1. [STI Prevention Conference](#) in Atlanta, Georgia (August 31-September 2, 2026)
2. IUSTI-World Congress in Prague, Czech Republic (October 14-17, 2026)
3. STI & HIV World Congress in New Delhi, India (October 21-24, 2027).

5. IUSTI Membership drive:

- IUSTI Canada actively welcomes new members to join its membership. Membership tiers include standard membership, trainee, and retiree membership. We also welcome group, network and not for profit memberships. For details regarding registration, please visit: <https://www.iusti-canada.ca/join-iusti-canada>; or contact IUSTI Team.

From the American Sexual Health Association (ASHA)



- The ASHA Board has spent the spring considering ASHA's role in the current environment. It reaffirmed that the core work of the organization is to deliver accessible, audience-centered, and science-based content to the general adult public that improves STI, HIV and HPV-related public health outcomes. To do this exceptionally well, the ASHA team has been expanding, identifying opportunities, and getting organized. Here are some things you should see from ASHA over the next six months:

- Deepening our knowledge of our audiences, like how they think about and access sexual health information now, what "hooks" them to learn more, and what messages create behavior change.
- Even more accessible, audience-centered content. ASHA's strength has always been translating science for the general public. Now you'll see content in Spanish, at more accessible literacy levels, and designed for the short-attention-span world our audience lives in. We're also redesigning our web site to get folks the answers they need faster and to meet the AI-centered moment.
- More presence in distribution channels that reach our target audiences where they already are. This means more action on channels like TikTok and Reddit, and partnerships with messengers they already trust.
- Even more active partnerships. We've enjoyed partnering with others — like the STI Partners workgroup and our CDC STOP STDs grant partners — to think deeply about how we can expand collective impact by mapping areas of overlap, collaboration opportunities, and gaps.

- In addition to this renewed focus on educating the public, ASHA has been busy supporting the STI Prevention Conference to be held Aug 31-Sep 2 in Atlanta. Under the direction of conference chairs Alison Footman and Bobbie Van der Pol, this year's conference responds to a changing STI prevention landscape. Under the theme *Forward Together: Uniting Science,*

Community, and Care for STI Prevention, it will bring together leaders across research, public health, advocacy, community, and clinical care together in a smaller, action-oriented format. Designed for those shaping the field's future, the conference challenges participants to protect hard-won gains—and lead what comes next. We are excited to see you all there! <https://stipreventionconference.org/>

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



- [Get your DIS Certification](#)
 - The [Disease Intervention Certification Exam application registration](#) is open, courtesy of the Certified in Disease Intervention (CDI) National Program.
 - Exam periods are:
 - Spring: April 1-May 15, 2026
 - Summer: July 1-September 15, 2026
 - Limited free exams are available for those who [register](#) early. Free test prep is also available.
 - Read more about [disease intervention](#).
 - Send questions to workforce@aspph.org.
- On April 14, 2026, King Pharmaceuticals LLC, a subsidiary of Pfizer, extended the next delivery of Bicillin® L-A to October 2026 and the anticipated recovery date to Q4 2027. This update was added to [our webpage](#) that tracks this information – and updates are available on [FDA's website](#).

- The Denver PTC is excited to announce the launch of the 7-part video series on syphilis. This comprehensive series explores diagnostic and clinical assessment, as well as best practices in the management of syphilis. The first two videos, featured [here](#), offer an overview of syphilis rates and guidance on diagnostic assessment.

Upcoming events in the IUSTI-NA region:



STI Prevention Conference, August 31-September 2, 2026, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

More information can be found at <https://stipreventionconference.org/>



The 2026 STI Prevention Conference comes at a moment when the STI field is being asked to do a lot at once: sustain progress, respond to new challenges, and chart a path forward in an increasingly complex environment. Convened under the theme, Forward Together: Uniting Science, Community, and Care for STI Prevention, the conference reflects both the urgency of the moment and the optimism that meaningful progress is still within reach, especially if we act collectively.

Recent declines in chlamydia and gonorrhea show that progress is possible. Yet the continued rise in congenital syphilis and persistent barriers in accessing sexual health services highlight gaps in prevention, testing,

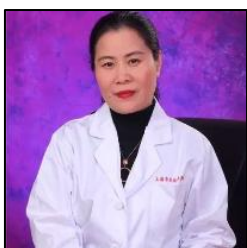
and treatment, which are affecting communities already disproportionately impacted by STIs.

The 2026 meeting is designed in response to a dramatically shifting US landscape marked by shrinking federal and state funding, terminated research grants, workforce shortages, and policies that increasingly make sexual healthcare inaccessible. The conference explicitly prioritizes prevention strategies, service delivery models, research, and policy approaches that remain responsive to community needs, even as resources tighten.

Against these challenges, the 2026 STI Prevention Conference centers collaboration across research, public health practice, community leadership, and clinical care to identify how the field can protect hard-won gains and do more with limited resources. With a smaller, action-oriented format, designed to foster meaningful engagement, the 2026 STI Prevention Conference serves as both a call to unity and a platform for collective leadership. It reaffirms a central truth: that progress in STI prevention depends on aligning science, community, and care – and moving forward together.

Caroline Cameron

Asia Pacific



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

2026 Annual STD Quality Control Training Conference, Shanghai

On June 24, 2026, the 2026 Annual STD Quality Control Training Conference was successfully held at the Zhonggu Xiaonan Guo Garden Hotel in Shanghai. Co-organized by the Shanghai STD Treatment Quality Control Center and the Shanghai Association for STD and AIDS Prevention and Control, the event brought together approximately 300 clinical practitioners from across the city.



The training program featured expert lectures on key topics including standardized syphilis diagnosis and laboratory quality management, reproductive tract infection protocols, ceftriaxone-resistant gonorrhea surveillance, HPV prevention and management, and national syphilis quality control indicators. Renowned specialists from institutions such as Shanghai Dermatology Hospital, Shanghai CDC, Huashan Hospital, and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences delivered sessions that balanced academic frontier insights with practical clinical guidance.



Beyond knowledge update, the conference strongly emphasized the importance of quality-consciousness and standardized practices in STD care. Interactive discussions and a post-training assessment helped reinforce learning outcomes. This annual initiative has effectively promoted academic exchange, shared best practices, and strengthened consensus on clinical protocols, laying a solid foundation for

advancing homogeneous, high-quality STD services throughout Shanghai and supporting the city's broader public health goals for STD prevention and control.

IUSTI-AP Meeting Updates

The IUSTI-AP (International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections – Asia-Pacific) meeting originally scheduled for December 2, 2026, in the Philippines has been cancelled. The meeting will now be held online in November 2026. Meanwhile, the IUSTI-AP Executive Committee has held multiple meetings to discuss the venue selection for the 2028 IUSTI-AP conference, with decisions expected in the coming months.

Pingyu Zhou

Conference Update

IUSTI Events:

IUSTI World Congress

14-17 October 2026

Prague, Czech Republic

<https://www.iustiprague2026.com/>

IUSTI-Europe Congress 2027

7–9 October 2027

Porto, Portugal

<https://iusti2027.com/>

IUSTI World Congress

21-24 October 2027

New Delhi, India

www.stihiv2027.org

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.

Prof. Jonathan Ross, Editor

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