



Vancouver hospital move draws fire

The battle over moving St. Paul's Hospital from downtown Vancouver to the False Creek Flats near the train station is heating up.

The coalition that is trying to keep the hospital at its current location on Burrard Street says the decision to move has already been made, despite promises to hold community consultations. It claims that hospital staff were told by Providence Health Care that the plans to move have been finalized.

But Neil McConnell of Providence Health Care said the plans to move have not been finalized. McConnell says the public consultations will take place in the spring and summer.

The current plan calls for part of the current St. Paul's site to be redeveloped for commercial and residential use. Some services including urgent, primary, and secondary care would also continue to be offered at the downtown location.

Source: www.cbc.ca

Legal Network releases plan to fix drug access

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network has called on Ottawa to take concrete steps to fix Canada's Access to Medicines Regime and get affordable drugs to people in developing countries who desperately need them.

Originally passed in May 2004 as the Jean Chrétien Pledge to Africa, the Regime was intended to allow generic drug companies in Canada to produce and export much-needed lower-cost versions of brand-name drugs to developing countries. To date, however, not a single pill has left Canada.

The cornerstone of the 13 recommendations in the Legal Network's brief is a proposal to authorize any pharmaceutical firm to produce generic versions of any drug patented in Canada for export to any eligible developing country listed in the law.

The full text of the brief, entitled "Getting the Regime Right: Compulsory Licensing of Pharmaceuticals for Export," is available at www.AIDSlaw.ca.

Resistance emerges in first months of treatment

A small, intensive German study has found that the emergence of drug resistance is already detectable in the first months of HIV treatment even if viral load is falling, and is especially pronounced in people who experience slower viral load declines.

As selection of drug-resistant virus correlated significantly with the length of time until viral load became undetectable, the researchers recommend therapy intensification during the early treatment phase to be considered as a strategy to control replication.

In this study, published in the March 30 edition of *AIDS*, 15 mainly chronically-infected patients were followed just prior to and during the early months of anti-retroviral therapy.

Source: aidsmap.com

China holds first gay HIV clinic

Free HIV/AIDS tests attracted more than 200 gay men to a Beijing hospital in April in what is being called a first for China's capital city. The clinic was organized by Chaoyang—the Chinese AIDS Volunteer Group.

Most of the men who turned up were in their thirties, although there were

some older men and college students. Each was given a number and a password to the Chaoyang website so they could easily retrieve their test results. In addition, safe-sex booklets were distributed and psychologists were on hand for anyone needing help.

That the clinic was held at all is seen as part of a new awakening to the reality of men-having-sex-with men in China. The Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS has warned that up to 10 million people in China could be infected by 2010 without more aggressive prevention measures.

Source: www.365Gay.com

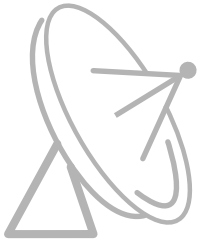
Researchers find protein that blocks HIV

German scientists have discovered a protein in human blood that can block HIV entry into immune system cells, potentially offering a new type of HIV fusion inhibitor that is non-toxic even at high concentrations. The findings were published in the April 20, 2007 issue of the journal *Cell*.

The protein, named virus inhibitor peptide, or VIRIP, is a fragment of a naturally occurring serine protease inhibitor whose main function is to protect the lungs against damage from neutrophils.

"The findings reveal a new target for inhibiting HIV that remains fully active against viral strains that are resistant to other drugs," said study author Frank Kirchhoff of the University of Ulm in Germany.

It was identified after the researchers sifted through a comprehensive library of small peptides that had been filtered from the blood of patients with chronic kidney failure during dialysis, in search of those with anti-HIV activity.



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VIRIP is being developed by IPF Pharmaceuticals GmbH, a German company.

Source: aidsmap.com

Australian PM backs down over ban

Australian Prime Minister John Howard has been forced to abandon plans to refuse entry to HIV-positive migrants and refugees.

A government spokesman has said that the commitment made by Prime Minister Howard will be “quietly dishonoured,” after he came under fire from HIV/AIDS groups.

The HIV/AIDS Legal Centre said that HIV-positive patients were already barred from entry into Australia in most cases, as was anyone else with a chronic medical condition who could be a drain on the system.

The centre slammed Mr. Howard for comparing HIV with tuberculosis, an airborne disease that is more easily passed on. A spokesman for the centre added that Mr. Howard’s comments could be in breach of Australia’s anti-discrimination legislation. The Prime Minister was also slammed by state AIDS bodies and HIV medical specialists.

The Prime Minister is an opponent of gay marriage and other rights for gay couples.

Source: www.pinknews.co.uk

NYC to promote circumcision to gay men

New York City’s Health Department is reportedly preparing a campaign promoting circumcision as a means of reducing HIV/AIDS among high-risk groups.

The *New York Times* reported that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene campaign is aimed at gay men,

Hispanics, and African Americans. The department began working on the campaign after the World Health Organization (WHO) last month cited “compelling” evidence that circumcision can reduce their chances of contracting HIV by up to 60 percent.

Some AIDS activists are urging caution in implementing the program. Peter Staley, a co-founder of AIDSmeds.com, ACT-UP New York, and the Treatment Action Group, noted the WHO study bore little relation to New York’s risk groups. And there are questions about how effective circumcision would be in preventing HIV/AIDS among men who have sex with men.

More than 100,000 of New York’s 8.2 million residents have HIV/AIDS.

Source: www.365gay.com

Chinese company to develop CCR5 inhibitor

The Shanghai-based Target Pharmaceutical company has signed the first stage of an international development and marketing agreement for an investigational CCR5 inhibitor, nifeviroc, with the Australian drug company Avexa.

CCR5 is a receptor on the surface of cells that HIV can use in order to gain entry. Blockade of the CCR5 receptor is an important target for drug discovery, but so far, only one company, Pfizer, has been able to bring a CCR5 inhibitor project to fruition.

Pfizer’s product, maraviroc, is now in phase III studies and is expected to receive a license for use in treatment-experienced patients before the end of 2007 in Europe and the US.

Nifeviroc was developed by the Shanghai Life Sciences Institute and the

Shanghai Institute of Organic Sciences. Phase I human studies are expected to begin next year. Avexa is already testing a nucleoside analogue called apricitabine in phase IIb studies and has an HIV integrase inhibitor discovery program.

Source: aidsmap.com

Green tea has anti-HIV effect in test tube

An ingredient in green tea may reduce HIV binding to human CD4 cells by approximately 40 percent within an hour of drinking two to three cups of green tea, according to a test tube study conducted at the University of Sheffield, England, published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.

Further research is needed to show whether drinking green tea protects against HIV infection or disease progression.

Recent research has shown that green tea contains flavonoids with anti-bacterial, anti-tumour, and anti-viral effects in the test tube. Several studies have now demonstrated that derivatives of a flavonoid in green tea can reduce HIV replication in the test tube, and that epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), the main flavonoid in green tea, can occupy the CD4 receptor on CD4 lymphocytes and prevent HIV’s gp120 protein from binding to the receptor.

This latest study shows that EGCG can prevent HIV from binding to the CD4 receptor at levels that are “physiologically relevant.”

Source: aidsmap.com ☉