

Conducting HIV Treatment Research In Resource Poor Countries - Workshops And Training Sessions

October 20-21, 2003

Baltimore, Maryland

Conference Summary

BACKGROUND

A rapidly expanding effort is now underway to plan for HIV research in Resource Poor Countries (RPCs). Such studies will address the unique treatment and prevention needs of these areas. As pressing and as laudable as these efforts have become, the implementation of studies in RPCs is fraught with substantial and complex difficulties. Few investigators in the developed world have the expertise necessary to implement treatment research in RPCs in a way that preserves data integrity, sensitivity to local sociopolitical issues, fiscal responsibility, and ethical domains. Alternatively, RPCs could benefit from the established work of investigators in the U.S. If these efforts are to expand and succeed, a larger number of potential investigators will require training in international research, and exposure to potential problems and solutions.

Five domestic institutions funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in collaboration with the NIH Office of AIDS Research conducted a two-day conference consisting of workshops/training sessions in which experts in HIV-treatment research shared their knowledge and lead small groups in workshops designed to better understand the critical steps needed to conduct HIV research of the highest possible caliber in RPCs.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

1. Introduce domestic clinical and laboratory investigators to issues and opportunities, and skills required in conducting collaborative HIV treatment research in RPCs.
2. Provide a forum for open discussion of the most important issues facing international HIV investigators in treatment research..
3. Provide an opportunity for researchers from domestic and international academic centers to share experiences with experts from the NIH, other governmental agencies and NGO's.
4. Discuss possible solutions to some of the most serious obstacles facing those who conduct HIV treatment research in RPC's.

FORMAT

The conference was held over two full days and consisted of ten two-hour workshops; each workshop was repeated once, and five workshops will be offered each day. This allowed each attendee to participate in four of the ten workshops. Each day began with a brief description of the topics to be covered in each workshop. Each workshop was designed to emphasize practical issues needed to successfully implement and manage HIV research in RPCs, with substantial audience participation and discussion expected and encouraged. To insure that important material is covered while encouraging discussion the workshop sessions began with a didactic presentation of issues and solutions followed by a guided discussion. Each day ended with a summary from the workshop leaders of problems and possible solutions discussed during the

workshop.

WORKSHOP AND FACULTY

The following is a list of workshops and faculty presenting in the workshops.

Workshop	Faculty
Ethics for Research in RPCs	Dr. Guido Levi , Dr. Gabriel Oselka
Building Infrastructure	Dr. Robert Bollinger, Dr. Thomas Quinn
Funding Organizations	Dr. Edmund Tramont, Ms. Joan Romaine, Dr. Elaine Gallin
Sociopolitical Issues	Dr. Kuku Appiah, Dr.Carlos Del Rio
Regulatory Affairs and IRB's	Ms. Barbara Pennington, Mr. Glen Drew, Ms. Yvonne Higgins
Training International Investigators and Research Personnel	Dr. Kenneth Bridbord, Dr. Jeanne McDermott, Dr. Sten Vermund
Integrating Clinical Research and Clinical Care	Dr. Laura Guay, Dr. Robert Salata
Data Management	Dr. Ben Masse, Dr. Malathi Ram
Budgets and Fiscal Responsibility	Mr. Banks Warden, Dr. Fred Batzold
Basic Science Research	Dr. Eric Arts, Dr. Pontiano Kaleebu

REGISTRATIONS/ATTENDANCE

- Registration Target- approximately 100.
- Actual Registrants-81.
- Attendees: 72.
- Over half with international experience.
- Varied occupations represented.

IMPACT OF THE CONFERENCE

There were two ways in which information was gathered about the impact of the conference. First, in the morning general session on day 2 a discussion was held to obtain comments about the conference, suggestions for improvement, and logical next steps. Second, a formal evaluation was conducted which provided a relatively objective information. The evaluation forms also had space for free-form comments, these were also compiled.

The conference was attended by a variety of participants who appeared genuinely interested in attending the conference. Many expressed that the conference was very much needed. There

was strong interaction and discussion in most of the workshops. As an example of this, it was noted that participants were extending many of the workshops beyond they planned times and were late for either lunch or their break. It is clear that the small group-discussion format fostered the interaction.

Objective Evaluation

The formal evaluation was very positive with the conference overall and most workshops receiving a rating of “Excellent” to “Very Good.” Of those completing an evaluation, 83% would recommend the conference to a colleague and 80% think conference should be offered again.

Comments

There were a number positive comments about the conference as well as valuable suggestions about how it could have been improved. In general, participants liked the format and size of the sessions. There were two major themes that emerged from the comments regarding improvement:

- First, the conference organization should be adjusted to allow for participation at more workshops. The structure of the conference allowed attendance at four of the ten workshops over two days.
- Second, concrete examples and experiences were considered valuable. A repeat conference should emphasize real life examples (case presentations) in as many workshops as possible.

Future Activities

During the general discussion session there were several suggestions for “next steps.” The following were important tasks to consider.

- Conduct of additional iterations of an “entry level” conference for those who missed this one.
- Conduct of an advanced level course for those who have attended this course and wish additional training.
- Promulgation of the materials from this meeting.
- Development of additional resources for investigators contemplating HIV research in PRCs.
 - Website with information on each country: travel requirements (e.g. need VISA, immunizations); culture; politics; languages patriarchal vs single family unit; how is HIV perceived and related taboos; what needs translation; etc.
 - A method (perhaps a web site) which helps link investigators with RPC sites seeking help. Learn about places with openings Opportunities for collaborations.

Discussion of these are underway.