

# Global Strategies

*for HIV Prevention*



## Newsletter

*June 2009*

### **After Disappointment - Unexpected Help Post Exposure Prophylaxis DR Congo Program**

*Every day, 50 to 75 women and girls are raped in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It is estimated that two-thirds of the rapists are infected with HIV.*

Thank you for your support of Global Strategies for HIV Prevention. We want to announce our Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Program in eastern DRC and share the story of how quickly and wonderfully it came together.

PEP is a lifesaving drug combination that can prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections if administered soon after exposure. It is the standard for prevention in the U.S. and developing nations following rape or accidental inoculation of HIV.

In eastern Congo, there is an epidemic of sexual violence and rape. Without PEP, women may become HIV-infected and transmit HIV to their children and sexual partner. If they are pregnant or nursing, they may transmit HIV to their unborn babies and their infants. Prevention is the only alternative to life-long infection and treatment with expensive drugs or, as in the DRC, no treatment at all and a long and ultimately fatal HIV infection.

HEAL Africa, one of our partners, reports between 800 and 1,000 rape victims each year in need of urgent treatment. We recently partnered with Panzi Hospital, located in Bukavu, South Kivu Province in eastern DRC. They report an equal number of victims and that the demand for lifesaving PEP kits exceeds the supply. Panzi Hospital was established in 1999 as a response to the atrocities being committed against women. Director of Panzi Hospital and surgeon, Dr. Denis Mukwege, is the winner of the 2008 UN Human Rights Prize.



Three months ago, we put out an urgent call for donations of the six drugs that are supplied in each PEP kit to prevent HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomonas, and unwanted pregnancy. Although there was no immediate response to our hundreds of emails soliciting medicines, one man responded three weeks later, initiating a cascade of events that brought life saving PEP drugs to eastern Congo faster than most believed possible.

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| February 10 | We were introduced to Harold Dick, who generously donated the funds needed for medicines to fill 1,000 PEP kits, as well as shipping costs, taxes, duty and fees.  |
| March 25    | The drugs were ordered and processed in record time by Cipla in India. Costs of the drugs in the U.S. were unaffordable. During the same month, we received a substantial donation from The Africa Education Initiative to support the Panzi Hospital program and another from a Robert James Frascino Foundation fundraising concert to support health care worker training and PEP kit distribution. |
| April 6     | The shipment was picked up by DHL in Mumbai, India.  |
| April 15    | The kits arrived at the DHL station in Bukavu, DR Congo with an extra fee that Harold Dick paid. We are grateful for the unanticipated, relatively smooth delivery of the kits to Bukavu and to Aissatou of the Stephen Lewis Foundation for assisting us in making the wire transfer to reimburse the fees.   |
| April 24    | The kits were safely delivered to Panzi Hospital.  |

For eastern Congo, this is a start. There are still countless more girls and women who need PEP, care and treatment – and their numbers grow daily. Our goal is to save more lives and develop a model for administering PEP at the grassroots level. We are laying a foundation and collecting the data to demonstrate how well the program works, that it can be implemented even under adverse circumstances, and that with adequate resources our Congolese partners can expand the reach and effectiveness of PEP.

Your support will help distribute the PEP kits, prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and train health care workers in rural areas to respond to these emergency needs. Help us support our Congolese partners as they labor to slow the spread of HIV.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arthur J. Ammann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A' and 'J'.

Arthur J Ammann MD, President