



EACS Newsletter - World AIDS Day 2018

Message from the President and President-elect



1 December 2018

30 years ago in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first-ever global health day, which now takes place on the 1st December each year. It is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, to show support for people living with HIV, and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. Although globally the number of new HIV infections is declining as a consequence of increased roll-out of antiretroviral therapy and an increasing number being undetectable on HIV therapy, particularly in Africa, the number of new HIV infections continues to increase and has almost doubled in Eastern Europe and central Asia. This clearly reminds us all that HIV has not gone away – there is still a vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice and stigma and improve education. With threatening cuts in the budget of most HIV organisations and within the global fund, increased efforts are needed to maintain HIV awareness and to underline the great impact HIV programmes have had on HIV-associated morbidity and mortality.

2018 has been a particularly important year for the development of HIV prevention strategies. Increasing feedback from pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) roll-out has demonstrated dramatic reductions in new HIV infections, eg In London and San Francisco. Better access to PrEP programmes has emphasized how important this prevention tool could become if PrEP access could be increased further. Currently only 350.000 of the estimated 3 million, which should be on PrEP by 2020 according to UNAIDS goals, are successfully receiving pre-exposure prophylaxis.

However, 2018 has also been an exciting year for HIV vaccine research. An important milestone was reached in 2009, when results from the RV144 trial in Thailand demonstrated that a candidate vaccine could elicit a degree of protection against HIV acquisition. The vaccine lowered the rate of infection by 31 percent among study volunteers. Although relatively modest, this was a significant finding and important lessons were learned from this trial, which have since helped to inform the selection of novel HIV vaccine candidates. This year, two new clinical studies are running in parallel in sub-Saharan Africa, both testing the efficacy of novel HIV vaccine regimens. The first study, HVTN 702, is evaluating a newer version of the vaccine regimen that was tested in the RV144 Thai trial, with the goal of building and improving on that first signal of success. This new regimen targets the clade C subtype of HIV, which is prevalent in southern Africa. The second study, HVTN 705/HPX2008 is evaluating the efficacy and safety of an investigational “mosaic”-based preventive vaccine regimen for HIV. This vaccine regimen is based on mosaic immunogens – vaccine components designed to induce immune responses against a wide variety of viral strains responsible for HIV infections worldwide. The ultimate goal is to achieve a “global vaccine” for HIV that could be deployed around the world. We have certainly come a long way from that first World AIDS Day, on a

fascinating journey of discovery and understanding, but there is clearly a lot to do. We need your continued involvement to push forward the advances already made and the greater ones to come.

So join us in celebrating World AIDS Day, become active members of our society, stand up and be counted!

Prof. Fiona Mulcahy, EACS President

Prof. Jürgen Rockstroh, EACS President-elect

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