



BC-CfE Director Dr. Julio Montaner and Canadian Governor General David Johnston
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BRITISH COLUMBIA CENTRE for EXCELLENCE in HIV/AIDS

Dr. Julio Montaner accepts inaugural Gold Leaf Prize for Impact on behalf of the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

In recognition of the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS' (BC-CfE) 25 years of leadership in the battle against HIV/AIDS Dr. Julio Montaner was in Ottawa on May 16th, 2017 to accept the CIHR Gold Leaf Prize for Impact on behalf of the staff of the BC-CfE.

The CIHR Gold Leaf Prize for Impact is awarded to an individual or team that demonstrates proven impact on health outcomes, practices, policies, and on the health system. The award acknowledges the role the BC-CfE has played for over 30 years developing effective treatment and providing care for those living with HIV/AIDS, educating health professionals worldwide, and promoting evidence-based policy to protect people and populations from the virus.

"I was incredibly proud to accept this award on behalf of the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS," said Dr. Julio Montaner, Director, BC-CfE. "Throughout its history, the BC-CfE has been a leader in tackling one of the world's deadliest diseases with an innovative and compassionate approach. The Gold Leaf Prize is recognition of the ground-breaking work of the scientists, doctors, researchers, health care providers and community members. All who tackled the complex challenges presented by the HIV/AIDS virus in the early days, developed innovative treatments and advocated for those most impacted by the disease."

Since 1981, the year HIV/AIDS first appeared in North America, an estimated 39 million people have died of AIDS worldwide. In British Columbia in the early 1990s, one person was dying of AIDS almost every day. Since then, as a result of the innovation by BC-CfE and the introduction of life-saving drug therapies, HIV has become a chronic

CIHR GOLD LEAF PRIZES: FAST FACTS

- The CIHR Gold Leaf Prizes celebrate Canadian discoveries in following areas: biomedical, clinical, health services and policy, and population and public health
- CIHR Gold Leaf Prize for Impact is awarded to an individual or team for health research with a proven impact on health outcomes, practices, policies and/or on the health system
- Each CIHR Gold Leaf Prize has a value of \$100,000, with winners also receiving a medal
- CIHR Gold Leaf Prizes are awarded every two years
- Prize winners are selected on the recommendation of a Gold Ribbon Panel

and manageable disease for those who can access highly active antiretroviral treatment (HAART).

In the early days of the HIV/AIDS crisis, innovation drove Dr. Montaner and the Centre's early successes in transforming the lethal *Pneumocystis pneumonia* (PCP), the most frequent cause of death among HIV-infected individuals, into a treatable and preventable condition. Over the following decade, the Centre's work on the development of new drugs and therapies led to Dr. Montaner's landmark study establishing the ability of NNRTI-based triple drug therapy (later known as HAART) to suppress HIV replication and put the disease into full and lasting remission.

The BC-CfE continued to lead advancements in the area of HIV/AIDS, with Dr. Montaner spearheading the single most successful example of knowledge translation in the history of medicine. Montaner used the Vancouver Conference to disseminate the emerging HAART strategy, ensuring it was accepted as the new standard of care by the end of the conference - 12 to 18 months before the research was published in peer-reviewed journals.

Providing full and early access to crucial drug treatments to all, including marginalized communities, and ensuring universal coverage is the concept behind Treatment as Prevention® (TasP®), an approach pioneered by Dr. Julio Montaner. Based on its success in improving quality of life and longevity of HIV/AIDS patients, while reducing the spread of illness, TasP® has been adopted by jurisdictions including Brazil, China, France, Panama, Spain, major US cities, and the state of Queensland in Australia. In 2015, a widely covered US National Institutes of Health (NIH) clinical study based in 35 countries, confirmed what the BC-CfE had been advocating for many years: early treatment is best to improve health outcomes and reduce transmission.

Since 1992, the BC-CfE has provided evidence to support policies and programs that improve the health and welfare of populations most vulnerable to HIV and other related diseases. From leading the development of new treatments for HIV/AIDS to pioneering the advancement of the TasP® model, the BC-CfE has grown to include 375 staff and a research laboratory, drug treatment program, epidemiology and population health program, the Urban Health Research Initiative and the Gender and Sexual Health Initiative.

» The British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS has played a significant role in leading in the fight against HIV/AIDS at home and around the world.

— Roderick McInnes, Acting President, Canadian Institutes of Health Research



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STUDY

BC-CfE study suggests “War on Drugs” a leading factor in HIV/AIDS deaths and infection



Study co-lead Dr. Kora DeBeck

» A systematic review of research conducted by BC-CfE and John Hopkins, revealing that laws and policies prohibiting drug use have a central role in undermining global HIV/AIDS efforts among people who inject drugs, was covered by *Newsweek*, *Vox* and *Science Daily*.

The study was led by Dr. Kora DeBeck, research scientist at BC-CfE in collaboration with associate professor of epidemiology at John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Stefan Baral, and published in *Lancet HIV*. It found the criminalization of drugs is a key driver of the global HIV epidemic and a potential barrier to eliminating HIV/AIDS. The effect of criminalization, including incarceration, street level policing, and drug paraphernalia laws and practices, negatively affected health outcomes for people who inject drugs due to decreased needle and syringe distribution, increased syringe sharing, and an increased burden of HIV.

“This provides an objective evidence base that the so-called global ‘War on Drugs’ is failing our

communities,” says Dr. DeBeck. “The unintended consequences of drug prohibition are astronomical and crippling our ability to prevent and respond to HIV/AIDS among other well-documented harms.”

Researchers systematically reviewed 106 global, peer-reviewed studies published between January 2006 and December 2014 on criminalization and HIV prevention or treatment among people who use injection drugs. The vast majority of studies consistently show drug criminalization has a harmful effect on HIV prevention and treatment.

“In order to finally achieve an AIDS-Free Generation in high and low income settings alike, we should collectively reform existing legal systems and policies that criminalize drug use by people who inject drugs,” says study co-lead Stefan Baral. “Evidence should guide policy. And the evidence here is clear in that criminalizing drugs takes a toll on those being criminalized and the communities in which they live alike.”

RESEARCH FUNDING

\$750,000 CIHR Project Grant funds research to examine persistent HIV disparities and STI increases in young gay, bisexual, queer and trans men

» The Canadian Institutes in Health Research (CIHR) has awarded \$750,000 to Dr. Nathan Lachowsky for the ongoing Momentum Health Study looking at the rates of STIs including syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia and HIV in younger, ethnically diverse populations of gay, queer, bisexual and trans men across Metro Vancouver.

Dr. Lachowsky, Assistant Professor at University of Victoria’s School of Public Health and Social Policy and a researcher at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, says the research was prompted by increases in new HIV diagnoses in young sexual minority men. “We need to understand why this was happening,” said Dr. Lachowsky. “We need to examine the awareness of STI prevention and HIV prevention, including new methods such as Treatment as Prevention, pre-exposure prophylaxis, known as PrEP, and post-exposure prophylaxis, known as PEP, as well as the quality of, and access to, care, support and resources in their communities.”

The project is a mixed method study with qualitative and quantitative components, relying on a cohort of 700 gay, bi, queer and trans men across Metro Vancouver. Researchers will collect three forms of data, including computer questionnaires, HIV and STI testing and in-depth qualitative interviews. Study participants are recruited to ensure that the cohort reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of young, sexual and gender minority men.

As for whether recruiting from ethnically, racially and linguistically diverse communities was difficult, Dr. Lachowsky says it was less of a challenge than the researchers expected.

“Gay, bi, and queer men of colour are passionate about having something said about their communities,” says Dr. Lachowsky. “The study recruitment relies on respondent-driven sampling where participants refer their peers into the study. This methodology optimizes the diversity and representative nature of the study population.”



Dr. Nathan Lachowsky

Researchers say Vancouver has seen an increase in the number of STI and HIV diagnoses among young gay, bi and queer men from across a spectrum of cultural, religious and linguistic experiences and backgrounds. Some of the men in the cohort come from an urban environment, but others are from suburban areas where access to supports and resources may be limited and further hindered by differential acceptance of their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

“At the end of the day, HIV and STIs continue to negatively impact younger men, and that’s troubling”, says Dr. Lachowsky. “This research will allow us to determine how we can ensure gay, bi, queer and trans men of all backgrounds are able to navigate health services, improve prevention, and reduce stigma.”

AWARD

Dr. Julio Montaner receives prestigious Killam Prize in ceremony at Rideau Hall



Dr. Julio Montaner was one of five eminent scholars and scientists to receive the prestigious Killam Prize at a ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa on May 30th, 2017 for their work in health sciences, engineering and humanities.

The Killam Prize recognizes the career achievements of Canadian scientists, writers, doctors and researchers whose lifetime of work has impacted Canadians and citizens around the world and made a substantial and significant contribution to their respective fields.

As a physician, researcher, and professor Dr. Montaner has helped improve the outcomes of people with HIV/AIDS for almost three decades in British Columbia. His innovative work on highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) and Treatment as Prevention® not only improved health outcomes and increased life expectancy for people around the globe, but also stopped the replication of the HIV virus and ensuring HIV positive people who were on sustained treatments did not transmit the virus.

LECTURES & EVENTS

Spring 2017 HIV/ARV Update

Monday, June 12, 2017

8:30 am to 5:00 pm

Grand Ballroom-North Tower, Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel

(for more information, please visit: bit.ly/ARVUpdateSpring17)

Forefront Lecture

Knowledge as Prevention: The Effect of New Information on Stigma and HIV Testing

Speaker: Laura Derksen

Wednesday, June 14, 2017, 12–1PM

Hurlburt Auditorium (2nd floor), St. Paul’s Hospital

Rates, characteristics and circumstances of methamphetamine-related death in Australia: A national 7 year study

Speaker: Shane Darke

Thursday, June 15, 2017, 2–3PM

Large Lecture Theatre, Providence Level 1, St. Paul’s Hospital

For more information, contact us at Education@cfenet.ubc.ca or visit our website at www.education.cfenet.ubc.ca

BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

- > Improve the health of British Columbians with HIV through comprehensive research and treatment programs;
- > Develop cost-effective research and therapeutic protocols;
- > Provide educational support programs to health-care professionals;
- > Monitor the impact of HIV/AIDS on B.C. and conduct analyses of the effectiveness of HIV-related programs.

Physician Drug Hotline
1.800.665.7677

St. Paul’s Hospital Pharmacy Hotline
1.888.511.6222

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