

## Dr. Julio Montaner honoured for leadership and success fighting HIV/AIDS



Dr. Julio Montaner (left), director, B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS with Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon at the event co-hosted by Providence Health Care and St. Paul's Hospital Foundation in honour of Dr. Montaner

Over the past month, Dr. Julio Montaner, director of the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE), has earned three prestigious awards and been feted by his health-care colleagues in B.C. for his decades of successful work fighting HIV and AIDS.

The recognitions he has received are provincial, national, and international in scope, including the Order of British Columbia, the highest honour the province of B.C. can bestow on individuals in the province.

On October 13, Providence Health Care (PHC) and St. Paul's Hospital Foundation co-hosted a special event in honour of Dr. Montaner to celebrate his decades of leadership, life-saving contributions and global vision in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Guests including friends, colleagues, government leaders, community partners and people living with HIV/AIDS gathered in the Conway Room at Vancouver's Shangri-La Hotel to thank Dr. Montaner for his years of service.

"I'm proud you are doing this today for Julio," said Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon in his speech at the event. "For nearly three

decades, Julio has stood at the forefront of HIV/AIDS treatment and he has impacted millions around the world in that role."

Minister Falcon recalled his first introduction to Dr. Montaner, one of the first meetings he had as Health Services Minister. "He was very compelling in terms of the great work that's being done in British Columbia, and that's why we decided to add \$48 million for the Seek and Treat program to ensure that the hard-to-reach populations get the care and treatment they need for HIV/AIDS."

Dianne Doyle, president and CEO of PHC, has seen Dr. Montaner grow from his days as a young clinician at St. Paul's Hospital 30 years ago to his leading international role today.

"Early in the 1980s, when the HIV/AIDS epidemic was first hitting the city of Vancouver, no one really understood the disease, its transmission, or the significant impact it would have on the health of the population of British Columbia. Julio and his colleagues were early to step up to the plate to lend their expertise to the investigation of this disease and the treatment of it," said Doyle.

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## ARV Update provides latest HIV treatment recommendations

Hundreds of B.C. and Canadian health care providers are expected to descend on the Grand Ballroom in Vancouver's Sheraton Wall Centre for the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE) 2010 Fall HIV/Antiretroviral (ARV) Update on December 3.

The biannual, one-day conference provides critical information to help those caring for people with HIV and AIDS offer the best treatment possible, said Dr. Marianne Harris, clinical research advisor for the AIDS Research Program at St. Paul's Hospital and co-chair of the Update event with Dr. Silvia Guillemi.

Harris added that the ARV Update is becoming more and more important with the expansion in B.C. of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), the landmark drug cocktail that has been adopted in Canada and around the world as the gold standard

treatment for HIV. The expansion of HAART means more physicians and other health care providers require up-to-date knowledge of HAART and how to best administer it.

"We are finding out new things all the time," said Harris. "Information is changing quickly."

The ARV Update is an open educational event sponsored by the BC-CfE and accredited by the College of Family Physicians of Canada, and community members are welcome to attend. The December 3 event is free and registration is full.

However, the event will be streamed live via a link from <http://www.cfenet.ubc.ca/events/fall-hivantiretroviral-update>. Further information about the ARV Update is also available at this web address.

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Photo credit: John Vanyshyn/Visions West

Dr. Julio Montaner, director, B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS with his Order of British Columbia

government who have fought against all odds to improve the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS."

Among his many accomplishments, Dr. Montaner, with his team of researchers at the BC-CfE played a key role in pioneering highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), which has been adopted as the gold standard treatment for HIV around the world. And

Dr. Montaner expressed his gratitude and emphasized the support that he and the BC-CfE have received from their peers and the provincial government.

"I will forever cherish and be humbled by this recognition," said Dr. Montaner. "But I could not have done this alone. Throughout my career, I have had the good fortune to work with passionate, dedicated and talented people at the BC-CfE, within the health and research community, and the provincial

recently, Dr. Montaner's lifesaving concept of "treatment as prevention" was cited by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) as the basis for their radical new approach to HIV treatment, dubbed "Treatment 2.0."

In a tribute video shown at the congratulatory event, Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, Nobel Laureate and co-discoverer of HIV, said: "Julio not only have you achieved excellent and pioneering work in the field of HIV treatment and prevention, but your research has always been guided by a high sense of solidarity and social justice for the benefit of all. As an engaged scientist, you truly are an example for all generations of researchers."

In further recognition of his work, Dr. Montaner received the Order of British Columbia in a ceremony held in the ballroom of Government House in Victoria on October 21. Dignitaries representing the public sector, industry, academia, First Nations, sport, philanthropy and science attended the event.

In addition, Dr. Montaner was recently named recipient of the 2010 "Albert Einstein" World Award of Science by the World Cultural Council, an international organization based in Mexico. Dr. Montaner was chosen for this honour for his relentless advancements in the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS since the early 1980s and for providing global leadership in establishing new strategies to defeat the epidemic.

And, in November this year, Montaner received the 2010 Prix Galien Canada award, which is the most prestigious award, referred to as the "Nobel Prize" in the field of Canadian pharmaceutical research and innovation.



## BC-CfE Study: Borrowing among Thai injection drug users alarming

Thomas Kerr, Nadia Fairbairn,  
Kanna Hayashi, Karyn Kaplan,  
Paisan Suwannawong,  
Evan Wood, Ruth Zang

A recent study conducted by  
researchers at the B.C. Centre for

Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE)  
found an alarmingly high rate  
of syringe borrowing among  
injection drug users (IDU) in  
Bangkok, Thailand.

A sample of 238 IDU participated  
in the Mit Sampan Community  
Research Project. Study findings  
showed that in total, 72 (30.3 per  
cent) participants reported  
borrowing a used syringe in the

previous six months. Out of these,  
47 (65.3 per cent) reported multiple  
borrowing events.

The authors found that difficulty  
with accessing clean syringes was  
driving the high rate of syringe  
borrowing in this study. The primary  
reasons provided for difficulty  
accessing clean syringes included  
distance to syringe outlets (34.1 per  
cent), closed pharmacies (13.6 per

cent), and being refused syringes at  
pharmacies (9.1 per cent).

Study authors recommended that  
the Thai government should take  
immediate action to increase access  
to sterile syringes among IDU as a  
harm reduction measure to curb  
new HIV infections among IDU.

*(Drug and Alcohol Dependence)*

## HAARTbeats

# Studies show HAART dramatically reduces mother-to-child HIV transmission through breastfeeding

**A**n estimated 430,000 infants and children are infected by HIV  
worldwide each year. Many of these infections are contracted  
from an HIV-positive mother during pregnancy or birth. However  
about 40 per cent of children get infected through breastfeeding.

A study conducted in Botswana and recently published in *The New  
England Journal of Medicine* has found that administering highly  
active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) to HIV-positive pregnant  
women led to a 99 percent drop in mother-to-child HIV transmission  
during breastfeeding.

"This is the lowest rate of mother-to-child transmission in a study  
from Africa, or among breastfeeding infants," said Roger Shapiro,  
an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and  
lead author of this study.

The study involved 730 HIV-positive pregnant women who were  
given HAART during pregnancy. Breastfed infants also received  
treatment. Of the 709 infants in the study who were born live,  
only eight of them had HIV by the age of six months.

The findings are good news for many HIV-infected mothers, who  
"were faced with a choice between breastfeeding and a high risk of  
infecting their children with HIV, or using formula and risking high  
infant morbidity and mortality from other diseases," said Max Essex,

a professor of health sciences and chair of the Harvard School  
of Public Health AIDS Initiative and a co-author of the study.  
"This study provides a more satisfactory solution."

HAART is the landmark drug cocktail pioneered by Dr. Julio  
Montaner, director of the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS  
(BC-CfE) and his team of researchers at the BC-CfE. It is recognized  
worldwide as the gold standard treatment for HIV.

In another study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*,  
researchers found that by providing HAART to infants can also  
greatly reduce their risk of contracting HIV through breastfeeding.

The study titled *Breastfeeding, Antiretrovirals and Nutrition Study* is the  
largest to date and involved 2,369 HIV-positive new mothers in Malawi.  
Each breastfeeding woman was randomly assigned to one of three  
groups. In the first group, the mother alone received HAART for the first  
seven months after the birth of the baby. In the second group, infants  
were given a liquid dose of HAART for seven months. In the third group,  
neither mothers nor infants were administered HAART after delivery.

At the end of seven months, the infant-treatment method had a  
success rate of 74 per cent in preventing HIV transmission through  
breastfeeding. The maternal-treatment method delivered a success  
rate of 53 per cent.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

# Central Interior Native Health Society provides Aboriginal approach to care



CINHS office

The availability of culturally appropriate care is an important factor in engaging Aboriginal individuals in health services. Recognizing this need, Prince George's Central Interior Native Health Society (CINHS) is helping to deliver a holistic, Aboriginal-informed approach to health to more than 1,000 clients in Northern British Columbia.

The clinic boasts a diverse interdisciplinary team that includes primary care physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, counsellors, social workers, and a First Nations elder. It is also supported by specialists in infectious disease, psychiatry, surgery and methadone. This team provides a broad range of primary and supportive health services, including HIV/AIDS care, to under-served Aboriginal individuals and those living on or close to the street.

"We provide a 'wrap-around' service," says nurse clinician Sam Milligan. "We like to say that if we can't quite meet your need here, we definitely know where we can get it met in the community."

To meet the needs of approximately 75 clients living with HIV, CINHS offers testing, counselling, and antiretroviral adherence support, along with

extensive outreach in the community. Milligan, who functions as an HIV case manager, frequently visits clients at home, at other service organizations, and in the hospital to ensure vaccines and blood work are up to date and that clients remain engaged in primary and specialist care.

His role also includes assisting clients to address other needs that can impact care – for instance, helping clients find housing or driving them to recycle bottles for a source of extra income. This emphasis on non-medical needs is key to CINHS' holistic approach, which seeks to address the emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual components of health.

With the launch of the Seek and Treat for Optimal Prevention of HIV/AIDS (STOP HIV/AIDS) pilot project in Prince George, CINHS is collaborating with Northern Health and other AIDS service providers to develop a model for the delivery of expanded testing, treatment, and support services. Milligan notes that 60 per cent of Northern B.C.'s HIV infections are among Aboriginal people, underscoring the need for an Aboriginal voice in STOP HIV/AIDS.

"We're definitely trying to ensure that any new programs designed will be with the needs of Aboriginal people in mind and will incorporate Aboriginal components, through steps like having an elder involved in the planning process," he says.

## > Quick Facts about CINHS

- Executive Director:** Murry Krause
- Location:** 1110 4th Avenue, Prince George, B.C.
- Contact:** 250-564-4422

## what's new

### Forefront Lecture Series

- What:** Gay men and HIV: findings from the Vancouver ManCount survey
- When:** Wednesday, December 1, from noon to 1 p.m.
- Where:** Hurlburt Auditorium, St. Paul's Hospital

Dr. Mark Gilbert is a physician epidemiologist at the BC Centre for Disease Control. A light lunch and refreshments will be served. For more information, please contact Andrea Keesey at 604-682-2344 ext. 66357 or [akeesey@cfenet.ubc.ca](mailto:akeesey@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.

### Undeliverable copies, notices to

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Tel: 604.806.8477

### Physician Drug Hotline

1.800.665.7677

### St. Paul's Hospital Pharmacy Hotline

1.888.551.6222

### Website

[www.cfenet.ubc.ca](http://www.cfenet.ubc.ca)

### E-mail

[info@cfenet.ubc.ca](mailto:info@cfenet.ubc.ca)

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