



Centre: Pope Francis; left: Dr. Montaner with Msgr. Karcher; top right: Dr. Montaner meets with Fr. Czerny and Cardinal Turkson; bottom right: Dr. Montaner meets with Msgr. Mupendawatu and Sister Resende

Dr. Julio Montaner holds discussions with senior Vatican officials regarding Treatment as Prevention®

Catholic Church a strong contributor to the fight against HIV and AIDS around the world

Director of the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE), Dr. Julio Montaner, was met with a substantial level of interest as he brought to the Vatican examples of achievements in British Columbia through Treatment as Prevention (TasP®). "It's not often that you get a thumbs up from His Holiness Pope Francis," said Dr. Montaner. The concept of TasP® was pioneered at the BC-CfE, led by Dr. Montaner. Its implementation in BC, with the strong support of the provincial government, has resulted in dramatically reduced HIV morbidity and mortality, as well as a steep decline in new HIV cases.

"It is very promising the Roman Catholic Church is expressing interest in Treatment as Prevention®," Dr. Montaner said. "The Church, with all its infrastructure and outreach, would be a fantastic partner to help expand TasP® globally."

The Catholic Church has previously expressed the need to treat those affected by HIV and AIDS with compassion and dignity. Through its global service and

charity arm, Caritas Internationalis, the church aims to provide access to antiretrovirals to those living with HIV worldwide currently not reached by treatment. The Vatican estimates Catholic Church-related organizations provide approximately one quarter of all HIV treatment, care and support throughout the world, particularly in resource limited settings where HIV rates are increasing.

On his visit in early March, Dr. Montaner met with a number of senior Vatican officials, including Ghanaian Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and his colleague Fr. Michael F. Czerny; and Msgr. Father Jean-Marie Mate Musivi Mupendawatu, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, and his colleague Sister Juliana Resende; as well as Msgr. Guillermo Karcher of the Vatican State Secretariat.

Some statistics about the global HIV epidemic:

- There are currently around 35 million people living with HIV worldwide, but approximately 19 million are unaware of their status. (UNAIDS)
- Sustained treatment on antiretroviral therapy reduces HIV transmission by greater than 95 per cent.
- The percentage of people living with HIV who were receiving antiretroviral treatment around the world is highest in North America and Western Europe at 51 [39–60] per cent, and in Latin America at 45 [33–51] per cent. In the Middle East and North Africa, coverage is 11 [8–16] per cent. (UNAIDS)
- Through the Treatment as Prevention® strategy, British Columbia is the only Canadian province to fully provide access to antiretroviral treatment, immediately upon diagnosis, and the only one to see a consistent decline in new HIV cases.



» I'm excited by the success of Treatment as Prevention® and its impact on the health of British Columbians. We've established a model for the world to follow and the world is indeed watching closely as B.C. continues to implement successful strategies for progress toward an HIV and AIDS-free generation.

— B.C. Minister of Health Terry Lake



BC-CfE Celebrates Int'l Women's Day

Women and girls are increasingly beginning to choose careers in science

There are a number of highly impressive women researchers at the BC-CfE who have done just that—and set the example for future generations. International Women's Day represents an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women while calling for greater equality. The United Nations theme for International Women's Day, *Empowering Women – Empowering Humanity: Picture It!*, promotes the vision

of a world where a woman has the freedom to exercise choices, free from violence and discrimination. The BC-CfE recently profiled five fabulous women researchers whose stories reflect the diversity in life experiences that led to research vocations. Below are two of the five researchers' profiles. To read the complete piece, please refer to bit.ly/BCCfECelebratesIWD.

Surita Parashar

Surita cherishes the wise words of advice she once received from a respected mentor who reminded her to "surround yourself with kind people and everything else will always work itself out." These are words that she takes to heart and also lives by. It is no wonder she was recently recognized by Simon Fraser University as one its top-fifty most inspiring graduates as part of the university's 50th anniversary celebrations. Quite an honour indeed!



Relations and working at Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) that the seeds of social justice work were planted. "This was my first experience working alongside people who had been impacted by violence and poverty and I felt myself pulled in that direction," she explains.

This led Surita to pursue a Master of International Affairs degree with the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University. It was there that Surita began to focus on the social determinants of health. A Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) internship brought her to the sub-Saharan African country of Lesotho, where she was inspired by the resilience of the community she was living in in the face of the devastation HIV/AIDS had brought to the country. The experience cemented her desire to continue work in this field.

"I consider myself very fortunate to have had such strong female figures throughout my life within my own family," Surita shares. "My advice to young women is to surround yourself with mentors who can make the impossible look possible, and most importantly, be kind to one another."

After completing a PhD at Simon Fraser University in Health Sciences, Surita is now a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the BC-CfE where she is leading an evaluation of a supportive housing intervention for people living with HIV. This prospective cohort study, conducted in partnership with McLaren Housing Society of BC and funded through a CIHR Population Health Intervention Research grant, investigates the impact of a supportive housing complex on the health of individuals and families affected by HIV.

The East Vancouver native recalls that while growing up, her mother always impressed upon her four children the value of education and hard work. Her father, meanwhile, emphasized the importance of pursuing any dream, and to never consider anything an insurmountable obstacle. A marriage of her parents' philosophies has guided Surita on her path. What is the obstacle she persistently chips away at every day? Health inequity.

"HIV is much more than a health issue. It's a story of inequity," she explains. In line with this perspective, she emphasizes the importance of hiring people living with HIV to be meaningfully involved in HIV research. "If alleviating health inequities is our aim, it must also be a key part of our approach to this work, and one concrete way to do that is to build capacity in the communities we work with." She describes how the inclusion of Peer Research Associates has deeply enriched the studies she works on, and the positive benefit of these work opportunities have spilled over into other aspects of peers' lives.

It was while completing her undergraduate degree at the University of British Columbia in International

Shira Goldenberg

Shira knew from an early age she wanted to help people and make a difference in their lives. Combining her love for the environment and interest in women's issues, she graduated from McGill University with a Bachelor of Environmental Science, minoring in International Development. It was during a field study semester to Panama that her passion for women's issues and interest in field research was ignited. This led to a Master of Science in Epidemiology at the University of British Columbia where she spent two years visiting the cold northern climate of Fort St. John to research the intersection between oil and gas extraction, migration patterns, and sexual health issues.



Shira feels tremendously fortunate for the academic opportunities she has received. "I have had amazing female mentors in my life at every stage of my career who encouraged me to move past my comfort zone, challenge myself, and sit at the table." She continues, "Science is often male-dominated, so it is very important for women who choose a career in the sciences to have confidence and not be afraid to speak up."

While completing her PhD at the University of California, San Diego, and San Diego State University, she researched migration and health issues along Mexico's northern and southern borders, where she also taught a field-based course in international migrant health. Shira has applied her experience in her current role with the BC-CfE's Gender and Sexual Health Initiative, where her research investigates disparities in HIV/STIs risks, access to treatment and care, and sexual and reproductive health among sex workers, migrants, and other marginalized populations in Vancouver, Mexico, and Central America. In the future she hopes to develop new interventions and strategies to improve the health of sex workers, migrants, and young women affected by HIV and STIs.

She admits that her parents were surprised by her choice of study, yet understood why she had chosen this path. She credits her worldview to her parents, who always emphasized "the big picture and showing us the value and importance of education and family, above material possessions."

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS



The 8th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS 2015) will be co-hosted by the Division of AIDS—UBC in Vancouver, July 19–22, 2015, and we need your help!

Volunteers will have the opportunity to gain international experience at the world's largest open scientific conference on HIV/AIDS—an event that is expected to attract over 7,000 of the leading scientists, clinicians, public health experts and community leaders in HIV and AIDS.

To Apply

An online application form will be available via the main IAS website (www.ias2015.org) as of April 1, 2015. Applications will close as soon as the number of volunteers needed has been reached.

For more information about volunteer eligibility and requirements, please visit the *Volunteers* tab at: www.ias2015.org; for additional questions, please contact: volunteers@ias2015.org.

IAS 2015 on Social Media

- Twitter @IAS_conference; #IAS2015
- Facebook fb.me/IASConference
Volunteers: on.fb.me/1DFSaS2
- YouTube Search "IAS 2015 Welcome"
- LinkedIn Search "IAS Conference"

LECTURES & EVENTS

HIV Care Rounds

TB and HIV

Speaker: Dr. James Johnston (BCCDC)

Thursday, April 9, 2015, 8–9AM

Conference Room 7 (Providence Level 1), St. Paul's Hospital

What's New in Addiction Medicine?

New Data on the Efficacy and Safety of Buprenorphine versus Methadone as First Line Therapy for Opioid Addiction

Speaker: Dr. Rita Lung (Clinical Fellow, St. Paul's Goldcorp Addiction Medicine Fellowship)

Tuesday, April 28, 2015, 12–1PM

Hurlburt Auditorium, 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

Website
www.cfenet.ubc.ca

E-mail
info@cfenet.ubc.ca

Funding for the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS is provided by the BC Ministry of Health through PharmaCare and the Provincial Health Services Authority.

