



NEW YORK STATE INTERNATIONAL TRAINING & RESEARCH PROGRAM

VOL I: FALL 2003

Welcome!

Since 1994, the New York State International Training & Research Program has provided high quality training to Central/Eastern European health care professionals on the prevention and treatment of HIV, TB and other infectious diseases. Funded by Fogarty International Center, our program represents a rich collaboration between SUNY Downstate Medical Center, New York State Department of Health's Wadsworth Center and Division of Epidemiology, and the School of Public Health at Albany. We initially launched our program with a cadre of physicians and laboratory fellows from the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Georgia and Armenia; we have since expanded our invitation to candidates from Russia, Estonia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, and Lithuania. Through this biannual newsletter, we hope to create a forum for all our Fogarty-funded trainees, past and present, to share information about current research in the field, recent publications, grant opportunities, and upcoming conferences. We hope you will enjoy our publication and invite you to contribute.

Inside this issue:

Welcome	1
CRDF Announcement	1
WAF Conference	2
Interview Corner	3
Recent Publications	3
Conferences	4
Grant Opportunities	5
Mailbag	5

The US Civilian Research and Development Foundation has recently announced a new initiative for scientists and engineers from the former Soviet Union and Baltic Countries. The award, *Targeted Research Competition: Cooperation in HIV/AIDS and Related Infections*, consists of two parts. The first component will foster a partnership between experts from the former Soviet Union and Baltic countries and the United States to present highly-scientific workshops. Up to 10 scientists each from the FSU/Baltic countries and the United States

may participate. The deadline for workshop proposals is January 23, 2004. Workshops must be held between April and November of 2004.

The CRDF will also accept joint US-FSU/Baltic proposals in the area of biological, biomedical and behavioral sciences that will make a positive contribution to the study of HIV/AIDS. Proposals should include an abstract, detailed project narrative, CV and a budget. The deadlines to submit cooperative research proposals are July 1, 2004, and December 1, 2004.

In addition, the CRDF will sponsor a junior scientist (Junior Scientist Travel Fellowship) for several highly-qualified junior scientists. The fellowship is awarded to those who wish to attend either the workshop or participate in one of the awarded proposal development workshops.

Countries invited to apply for these CRDF awards include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Russia and Baltic States. Additional details can be found at www.crdf.org.

Interview with Maia Butsashvili, MD, MS Rehabilitation Center of Georgia

Interview Corner

Fogarty Information:

I was a trainee September 1998-May 2000. I received an MS with a concentration in epidemiology.

Main areas of interests:

HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases; transmission of Infections from mother-to-child

What Maia has been working on:

I was working in Georgian AIDS Center as a physician-immunologist. I am the leader of the project "Prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV infection in Georgia" funded by Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, which is performed by Rehabilitation Center together with Maternal and Child Care Union (NGO operated on the basis of Rehabilitation Center). Through this project volun-

tary counseling and testing of pregnant women on HIV infection is being implemented in Tbilisi, capital of Georgia. All pregnant women in Tbilisi are offered to be counseled and tested on HIV infection and prophylactic antiretroviral treatment will be administered to all HIV positive women to prevent HIV transmission to their infants. I am involved in the activities of Center for prevention and management of congenital infections, established in 2002 in collaboration with the Central Pediatric Clinic of the Tbilisi State Medical University. The laboratory for diagnostics of infections in pregnant women and infants efficiently operates in our institution. I collaborate with magazine "Parents' School", which is published bimonthly by our institution and

provides useful information on the prevention and management of different somatic and infectious diseases for medical personnel, parents and teenagers.

Future plans:

Working on the project "Prevalence of different viral and bacterial infections among newborns with generalized infection" (re-entry grant awarded from FIC). Extension of the ongoing project "Prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV infection in Georgia", currently operating only in the capital of Georgia for other regions of the country. Working with health care workers in the field of prevention of blood borne pathogens in health care settings

Where you can reach Dr Butsashvili:

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Recent Fellow Publications

Somoskovi A., Song Q., **Mester J.**, Tanner C., Hale YM., Parsons LM., Salfinger M. Use of Molecular Methods to Identify the Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex and other Mycobacterial species, and to Detect Resistance in TB Following Growth Detection in the BACTEC MGIT 960 System. J Clin Microbiol. 2003 Jul;41(7):2822-6.

Mester J., Vadasz I., Fodor T., Ethambutol sensitivity test. Int J Tuberc Lung Dis. 2003 Jun;7(6):603

Cowan FM, French RS, Mayaud P., Gopal R., Robinson NJ, DeOliveira SA, Faillace T., **Uuskula A.**, Nygard-Kilbur M., Ramalingam S., Sridharan G., El Aouad R., Alami K., Rbai M., Sunil-Chandra MP, Brown DW. Seroepidemiological study of herpes simplex virus types 1 and 2 in Brazil, Estonia, India, Morocco, and Sri Lanka. Sex Transm Infect. 2003 Aug;79(4):286-290.

Janulionis E., Sofer C., Wallis R. "Is clofazimine antimycobacterial? Novel approaches to evaluate chemotherapy for MDR TB" Submitted to the annual meeting of the European Society of Mycobacteriology, and to the annual conference of the US Japan Cooperative Medical Science Program on Tuberculosis and Leprosy

Please let us know if you've recently published a paper or presented an abstract at a conference.

Past Conferences

Ethical Issues in Health Research, June 3-6, in Sofia, Bulgaria. With a focus on the protection of human subjects in public health research and internationally accepted principles of bioethics, highlights included discussion on informed consent, ethics and human rights, issues in clinical research and the development of research ethics in Central and Eastern Europe and CIS. Faculty included Jack A DeHovitz, MD, MPH, Director of AITRP at SUNY Downstate Medical Center, and Louise-Anne McNutt, PhD, Professor of Epidemiology and Faculty Mentor at the School of Public Health, Albany. Fogarty alumni, **Dr Magdalena Rosinska** [co-authored with **Dr Agnieszka Bielak** (Poland)] presented *Prevalence and Risk Factors of Infectious Diseases among Drug Users in Northern Poland*. More information is available at the website: <http://www.uic.edu/sph/glakes/global/conferences/sofia2003/index.htm>

The 2003 ISSTD Conference in Ottawa, Canada, sponsored by the International Society for Sexually Transmitted Diseases Research Congress. July 27-30. Website: <http://www.isstd.org>. Abstracts were presented by **Lusine Ghazaryan** (MPH, 2003); *Predictors Of Chlamydia Infection in New York State Sentinel Sites* and **Anneli Uuskula** (MS, 2003); *Treatment of the sexually transmitted diseases in Estonia: consistency with the evidence based medicine principles*.

U.S.-Georgia Biomedical Collaboration: Past Accomplishments, Current Status, and Future Regional Opportunities in the Caucasus. Oct 15-18. Technical presentations included Infectious Diseases (HIV/AIDS, TB, STDs) and Chronic, non-communicable diseases (cancer). Also discussed: Hepatitis (epidemiology, prevention of transmission) and Drug Abuse: Prevention of IDU. Drs Jack DeHovitz, Dale Morse, Louise-Anne McNutt and Karim Hechemy attended this meeting. Former Fogarty Trainee Lusine Ghazaryan was also in attendance. More information about CRDF-sponsored events (including this one) can be found at: <http://www.crdf.org/E-Update/Sept2002/caucasuswrkshps.htm>.

Upcoming Conferences:

The 2004 ICEID (International Conference on Emerging and Infectious Disease) conference will be held February 29– March 3 in Atlanta, Georgia. Major topics that will be covered include: Antimicrobial resistance, Global Health, Molecular Diagnostics and Epidemiology, Vectorborne and Zoonotic Diseases.

Abstract deadline: Electronic and paper submissions must be received by: November 14, 2003 5:00 PM EST.

Pre-registration deadline is February 14, 2004

Website: <http://www.iceid.org/>

All second-year students should consider submitting abstracts; please see Dr Dale Morse for details.

Grant Opportunities

GRIP (Global Health Research Initiative Program for New Foreign Investigators) is a Fogarty grant that provides an excellent opportunity for trainees returning to their home country to enhance their scientific research. Upon completion of research, investigators will have the tools to continue to pursue fruitful research and lead productive careers, including expert training, consultation or research related to biomedical issues within their home institutions. Application Receipt Date: August 25, 2003; August 25, 2004; August 25, 2005. Website: <http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/GRIP.html>.

The Fogarty International Research Collaboration Award (**FIRCA**) is open to all Fogarty Trainees and their US Principle Investigators. The grant is awarded to the US based institution that will work directly with the Fogarty trainee and their home institution. All biomedical and behavioral research topics supported by the NIH are eligible for inclusion. Website: <http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/firca.html>. Deadlines are November 25, March 25 and July 25. Please keep in mind that FIRCAs are not AIDS related grants.

Find additional information about Fogarty grants at <http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/grants.html>

Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation CALL TO ACTION PROJECT

A Global Program to Prevent Mother-to Child Transmission of HIV

The Call To Action Project, which was initiated in 1999, is a tremendous opportunity for researchers to implement innovative programs to reduce the transmission of HIV from mother to child in developing countries. Funds from the grant are used to provide community education, training of health-care workers, HIV counseling and testing, antiretrovirals to prevent MTCT, diagnosis of HIV in children, and infant-feeding education. Eight sites throughout the world were initially funded, and since then, over 300 sites have greatly benefited from receiving the Glaser award. Work is currently done in areas such as Cameroon, Congo, Russia, Malawi, South Africa, India and many other countries.

Applicants must first submit a Program Abstract. Accepted abstracts will then invite the researcher to send in a full application. Submission of an abstract does not guarantee an invitation for submission. There is no deadline for submission.

Applications will be considered for Planning Grants with a one-year duration. Fuller grants, such as the Implementation Grants, are for one or two years.

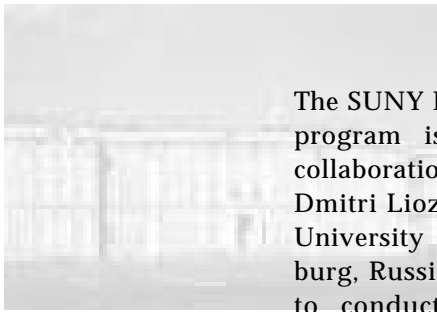
Details about the grant and submission can be found at: <http://www.pedaids.org/ctarfa.html>

Advanced In-Country Training Grants: Update

The final deadline for submitting applications for Advanced In-Country Training Grants will be February 28th.

If you are interested in applying for the grant, please contact Dr Jack DeHovitz or Dr Dale Morse as soon as possible.

World AIDS Foundation Conferences



The SUNY Downstate FIC program is working in collaboration with Dr. Dmitri Lioznov of Pavlov University (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation) to conduct a series of three HIV-related medical conferences in 2003.

These conferences, funded by a grant awarded to Pavlov University from the World AIDS Foundation, are designed to educate infectious disease and primary care physicians on all aspects of medical care for people with HIV.

The epidemic in St. Petersburg is largely driven by needle-sharing practices of injecting drug users. The burgeoning population of people with HIV in this sector of Russia is mostly young heroine users living in impoverished conditions, many of whom die from overdose before becoming debilitated by AIDS. Some of the obstacles to HIV treatment include access to substance use treatment, and access to common HAART medications. We are working with our Russian collaborators to focus on clear prevention strategies, and to address an inadequate medical infrastructure, which needs to be solved quickly in order to manage a costly and highly morbid illness.



Dr Jack DeHovitz giving a talk at the WAF Conference in St Petersburg, Russia

The first conference took place January 21-22. SUNY Downstate faculty included Dr. Devhovitz and David Odegaard, MPH; additional faculty from St. Clair's Hospital Ladan Ahmadi, MD, and Nancy Murphy, ANP. Victoria Sharpe, MD, from St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital was also in attendance. The 76 participants were mostly physicians from medical institutions in St. Petersburg and its outlying areas. The American faculty presented on an update of HIV medication, the management of opportunistic infections, TB/HIV coinfection, post-exposure prophylaxis for occupational exposure to HIV, harm reduction, HIV counseling and testing. The Russian Federation faculty spoke on HIV and hepatitis epidemiology in Russia and St. Petersburg, the pathogenesis of HIV, and medical care of HIV patients in Russia.

The conference concluded with participants' questions and comments. Participants gave the program excellent evaluations.

The second conference took place April 27-29, mostly attended by the same participants from the first conference. This meeting used a workshop approach with small groups to stimulate audience interaction. The American faculty, Jeffrey Birnbaum, MD, Myra Schultz, MSW, and David Odegaard, led the trainees in group discussion and exercises on how to care for adolescent HIV populations, the treatment of mental health issues of people with HIV, and how to conduct pre and post-test HIV counseling. The last day of the conference returned to a didactic approach, on the management of viral hepatitis, conducted by the Russian Federation faculty.

A third conference, held in September, was devoted to the medical management of women with HIV, with a special focus on the prevention of vertical HIV transmission.



The third installment of the World AIDS Foundation Conference took place September 17-19th in St Petersburg, Russia



The New York State International Training and Research program is sponsored by the Fogarty International Center and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The program is cooperatively administered by Wadsworth Center and Division of Epidemiology, New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) at Albany, the Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, and the School of Public Health at Albany, the State University of New York.

Please keep in touch! Send us your recent publications, conference news or change of address. We would like to hear from all of you.

Send all information to:

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Important Websites:

<http://www.downstate.edu/hiv/p3a.html>

<http://www.wadsworth.org/educate/educate.htm>

<http://www.albany.edu/sph/>

<http://www.fic.nih.gov/index.html>