



July 13, 2006

MEMO

To: Interested Reporters, Editors and Producers

Fr: Tamar Abrams (PAI), Caucus for Evidence-Based Prevention, 202.557.3407

RE: Resource for Information Related to the XVI International AIDS Conference

Is HIV prevention news?

At the 25-year mark of the global AIDS epidemic, HIV prevention is at a watershed. Though there is still no cure or vaccine for AIDS, a range of successful strategies – from condoms and pre-natal drug therapy to AIDS education, counseling and testing – have been shown to reduce HIV infection rates all over the world. Every year, innovative new prevention technologies are being introduced, yet fewer than 20 percent of those at high risk for HIV infection have access to even the most basic prevention services.

As the global public health community turns its attention to Toronto for the XVI International AIDS Conference, a coalition of US-based non-governmental organizations and their international partners has formed the **Caucus for Evidence-Based Prevention**. The Caucus will provide expert guidance on new developments in prevention presented in Toronto and the importance of global HIV prevention based on sound scientific evidence.

What is “evidence-based prevention”? Why is evidence so important?

“Evidence” refers to data from rigorously designed, implemented, and evaluated studies and programs. HIV prevention methods supported by such data have been shown to reduce HIV infection rates and keep people from dying of AIDS in many different locales. In an era of dwindling resources, we must focus on prevention strategies whose efficacy has been proven to have a significant effect on HIV transmission rates.

Recently, evidence has become a controversial issue in the global conversation about HIV and AIDS. Too often, for ideological and political reasons, strategies with no proven efficacy have been promoted instead of those that are known to work. We cannot afford

to take the risk that people who are vulnerable to HIV infection are denied the means to protect themselves and their loved ones. Too many human lives are at stake.

What will the Caucus do to clarify these issues in Toronto?

This multidisciplinary group of more than 30 organizations, facilitated by amfAR, Population Action International (PAI) and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the US (SIECUS), is a collective voice among US NGOs and their international partners concerned that HIV/AIDS prevention is increasingly influenced by ideological agendas. The Caucus will meet throughout the International AIDS Conference to highlight and evaluate prevention-related conference activities for multiple audiences, monitor the use of evidence in HIV prevention, and alert the community when ideology, prejudice, or opinion interfere with evidence-based approaches to reducing the further spread of HIV/AIDS.

The Caucus can provide you with background information and spokespersons on a range of topics related to evidence-based prevention, including behavioral interventions, sexual and reproductive health, disproportionately affected communities, the integration of prevention and treatment, new prevention technologies, and prevention geared towards young people.

The Caucus will also publish a daily newsletter that highlights advances in prevention research and assesses the use of evidence in prevention programs and policies. In addition, the Caucus will serve as a comprehensive source for any interviews or information you need from its NGO members. A list of organizations currently signed on as members to the Caucus is attached.

The global community cannot afford to stray from prevention strategies that are proven effective and that have the greatest potential for stopping the spread of infection. If you'd like to sign on to the Caucus' Media List to receive additional information, please send an email to tabrams@popact.org or call 202.557.3407.

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Members, Caucus for Evidence-Based Prevention:

Advocates for Youth
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition
Alliance for Microbicide Development
American Academy of HIV Medicine
amfAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Catholics for a Free Choice
Center for Health and Gender Equity
Community Education Group
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP)
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
EngenderHealth
Family Care International
Futures Group
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Global AIDS Alliance
Global Campaign for Microbicides
Global Health Council
Guttmacher Institute
Harm Reduction Coalition
HIV Medicine Association
International AIDS Vaccine Initiative
International Planned Parenthood Federation/ Western Hemisphere Region
Ipas
Management Sciences for Health
National Association of People Living with AIDS
National Minority AIDS Council
PP-Golden Gate
Population Action International
Population Council
Population Services International
SIECUS, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States
The Female Health Foundation
The AIDS Institute
The Well Project
Treatment Action Group