

BE THE GENERATION

TO END THE AIDS EPIDEMIC

BTG News

2019 Edition, Issue 1

From the Editor

Happy New Year from all of us at Be the Generation (BTG), as well as our friends from the HIV Prevention Trials Network, HIV Vaccine Trials Network, Microbicide Trials Network, and Office of HIV/AIDS Network Coordination! As you can tell from the wealth of activities described in this newsletter, we have been busy these first couple of months in 2019. Therefore, we'll keep this section brief so you can get to the good stuff.

As always, keep checking out everything we have to offer on our [website](#) and [Facebook](#)—and share with others. And please enjoy these photos of BTG's "Fab Four" at our recent appearance at the NAESM conference in January!



Thanks for all you do to **Be the Generation** to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic,

Brian Minalga &
The Legacy Project

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HIV Prevention Trials Network (HPTN)

The [HPTN 083](#) study has enrolled more than 3,100 participants out of a target enrollment of 4,500. The study is testing a drug called *cabotegravir* that is given by injection to see how it compares to daily oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention. Cabotegravir is a long-acting agent; if it works to prevent HIV, it might give people an alternative to having to take a pill every day. The study is enrolling HIV-negative men and transgender women who have sex with men in the Americas, Asia, and South Africa.

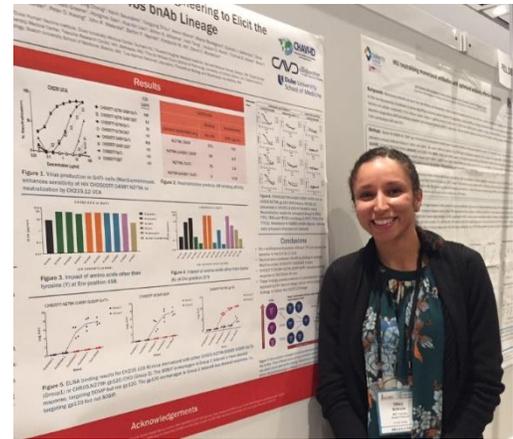
The [HPTN 084](#) study has enrolled more than 550 participants. The target enrollment is 3,200 HIV-negative cisgender women. Like HPTN 083, this study is also evaluating long-acting injectable cabotegravir compared to daily oral (PrEP). The main difference is the study population (HIV-negative cisgender women) and the study location (several countries in sub-Saharan Africa).

The National AIDS Education and Services for Minorities (NAESM) conference took place January 17-20 in Arlington, Virginia. During the four-day event, representatives from the HPTN and the HPTN Black Caucus delivered two presentations. “HPTN Responds to the BGRG Research Agenda: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach” provided an overview of the HPTN’s research, as well as of additional research strategies that can be used to inform the development of community programs. “Be The Generation: Empowering Communities to End the HIV/AIDS Epidemic” was organized by the [Legacy Project](#) and featured speakers from the HPTN, HVTN, and MTN discussing the [Be the Generation](#) (BTG) project.

HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN)

The HIV Vaccine Trials Network, in collaboration with the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, continues to invest in the next generation of HIV prevention researchers with the [Research and Mentorship Program \(RAMP\)](#). This award provides African American and Latinx medical students with opportunities for independent HIV prevention research along with structured mentoring, project and salary funding, training, and professional development activities.

To date, the program has awarded 61 exceptional medical students in 8 cohorts to conduct a research project at an HVTN site and present the results at an HVTN Meeting. The Cohort 9 Review Board meeting recently took place, and the next group of awardees will be announced soon.



Shay Behrens at the 2018 HIV R4P Conference

Microbicide Trials Network (MTN)

MTN is pleased to announce the launch of two vaginal microbicide studies. The first, [REACH](#) (Reversing the Epidemic in Africa with Choices in HIV prevention), also known as MTN-034, is evaluating oral PrEP and the monthly dapivirine vaginal ring in cisgender young women and teens. REACH is a study designed to fill important gaps in information about the safety and acceptability of oral PrEP and the dapivirine ring in younger populations, and to understand what young women need to help them to use both products. REACH will enroll 300 young women and girls ages 16 to 21 at five clinical research sites in Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.



Currently under regulatory review, if approved, the dapivirine ring would be the first biomedical prevention method specifically for cisgender women.

Another vaginal microbicide study that has launched, [MTN-038](#), is a study evaluating the safety and pharmacokinetics (how the drug moves within the body) of a 90-day vaginal ring containing the antiretroviral drug tenofovir. The ring being tested is designed to protect cisgender women against both HIV and herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2), and it will enroll 48 participants at sites in

Birmingham (Alabama), Pittsburgh, and San Francisco. No biomedical prevention method currently exists for HSV-2, the most common cause of genital herpes. HSV-2 also increases the likelihood of acquiring HIV, especially among cisgender women, who account for nearly half of those living with HIV worldwide.

In rectal news, the MTN has a study of the first-ever rectal gel to prevent HIV, herpes simplex virus (HSV), *and* human papillomavirus (HPV). The study, [MTN-037](#), is evaluating the safety of a multipurpose gel called PC-1005, which was developed by the Population Council to prevent HIV, HSV and HPV simultaneously. HPV is common among cisgender men who have sex with men and is a primary risk factor for developing anal cancer, while HSV increases susceptibility to HIV. PC-1005 is the only product designed for vaginal and rectal use targeting all three sexually transmitted infections that has undergone a Phase 1 study to date. MTN-037 has completed enrollment.

Another rectal study under development is expected to launch within the next month. The DESIRE (Developing and Evaluating Short-acting Innovations for Rectal Use) study, or [MTN-035](#), will evaluate the acceptability, tolerability, and adherence to a placebo douche, suppository, and fast-dissolving rectal tablet (insert) among cisgender men, transgender men, and transgender women who have sex with men. The study includes sites in Malawi, Peru, South Africa, Thailand, and the United States.



The DESIRE study has a new logo!

All of these studies were discussed at MTN's 2019 Annual Meeting, February 10-13, at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, VA. Specific topics covered at the meeting included

- microbicides in the prevention landscape
- understanding PrEP in pregnant and breastfeeding women

- prevention for youth
- and moving from *options* to *choices*. The full [meeting agenda](#) is available on the MTN website.

A recent webinar on the CHARISMA study presented new data from interventions with cisgender women to address HIV prevention, relationship dynamics, and intimate partner violence. The CHARISMA study is nested within MTN's HIV Open Label Prevention Extension ([HOPE](#)) study of the dapivirine ring study, and includes HOPE participants enrolled at the Wits RHI Hillbrow site in Johannesburg, South Africa. A [recording of the webinar](#), *Love, Power and PrEP: Addressing relationship dynamics and intimate partner violence to promote successful prevention for women and girls*, is available for those who missed it.

MTN provided an update on microbicide research at the *Biomedical Prevention Options for the Future* session at the 2018 Biomedical HIV Prevention Summit in Los Angeles, and at a Be the Generation session, *Empowering Communities to End the HIV/AIDS Epidemic*, at the 2019 NAESM meeting in Arlington, VA. For both meetings, MTN presented on vaginal ring studies in development that are focused on key populations—including pregnant and breastfeeding women and young women and adolescent girls—and gave an update on rectal microbicide studies underway and being planned.

Office of HIV/AIDS Network Coordination (HANC)

HANC Events

- March 2-3: The Women's HIV Research Collaborative (WHRC) will feature a poster at the International Workshop on HIV and Women in Seattle. The poster, titled, "**We Can Do It! Addressing Intimate Partner Violence in HIV Research with Women,**" summarizes the relationship between IPV and HIV, and how HIV prevention studies must address this reality in order to design studies and study products that are responsive to women's HIV prevention needs. For more information, contact bminalga@fredhutch.org.
- March 10: [National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day](#). Check our [Facebook page](#) for some exciting news on HIV research and women.
- March 18-21: The CDC's National HIV Prevention Conference in Atlanta, GA. Look for the poster we submitted with the Division of AIDS Cross-Network Transgender Working Group, "**First, Do No Harm: Fostering Transgender Inclusion in HIV Research.**"

- April 10: We recognize [National Youth HIV/AIDS Awareness Day](#).
- April 18: We recognize [National Transgender HIV Testing Day](#).
- May 16-17: The Legacy Project assists with the first Washington State HIV Conference in Spokane, WA.
- May 18: We recognize [HIV Vaccine Awareness Day](#).
- May 19: We recognize [National Asian-Pacific American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day](#).

HANC Webinars

Make sure you follow us on [Facebook](#) so you can keep track of these upcoming webinars and register when the time comes:

- March 27 at 1 p.m. Pacific: **“We Are More Than Our Genetic Material: Centering People Living with HIV in HIV Genetic Sequencing.”** HIV genetic sequencing (HGS) is a powerful tool that is helping us to better understand HIV, but it also raises some critical ethical concerns. Join us for part 1 of this four-part webinar series to learn more about HGS and how you can advocate for the meaningful and ethical use of this technology.
- April 18 at 10 a.m. Pacific: **“These Trees Cast No Shade: Understanding HIV Phylogenetics Research.”** In the second webinar in the series, Dr. Carl Dieffenbach will explain phylogenetics, how it is being used in HIV research, and how the communities most impacted by HIV are being prioritized in this research. Venita Ray will then share recommendations for conducting this research ethically. [Registration available now](#).
- April 25 at 11 a.m. Pacific: **“Understanding Molecular HIV Surveillance.”** In Part 3 of this series, we turn our attention to the public health use of HIV genetic sequencing known as molecular HIV surveillance (MHS). Dr. Eugene McCray will explain MHS from the perspective of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We will then hear from Naina Khanna (Positive Women’s Network-USA) who will discuss ethical and social justice considerations for MHS. [Registration available now](#).
- April 26 at 7 a.m. Pacific: The Youth Prevention Research Working Group will host a webinar on [IMPAACT 2016](#), a study of a group-based intervention to improve mental health and ART adherence among adolescents living with HIV. The webinar will be presented by IMPAACT 2016 Study Co-Chairs, Dr. Geri Donenberg and Dr. Dorothy Dow.
- May 15 at 1 p.m. Pacific: **“Community Town Hall: HIV Genetic Sequencing.”** Join us for the closing webinar in this four-part series.