

BE THE GENERATION

TO END THE AIDS EPIDEMIC

BTG News

2018 Edition, Issue 4

From the Editor

December 1, 2018 marks the 30th anniversary of World AIDS Day. Thirty years is a long time to keep the memory of our friends and family alive—35 *million lives* and counting. But there is hope. In this final issue of 2018, *BTG News* brings you updates from researchers and community members dedicated to the search for safe and effective methods to prevent HIV: the HPTN, HVTN, MTN, and HANC. You too play a role in this movement. Please [visit us on Facebook](#) to tell us what you're up to this World AIDS Day—we'd love to hear from you!

December 1st is also a Be the Generation anniversary: we published our modern website just one year ago. In October, we reached our 1,000th user! We are so proud to be a part of this movement that now has over 1,200 followers in over 50 countries. Thank you for building it with us. Keep sharing [the website](#) and its resources so we can reach the next 1,000 people committed to ending the epidemic. Indeed, we are the generation tasked with ending HIV/AIDS. Remember that this World AIDS Day as you pin on your red ribbon. Reflect on how far we've come with microbicides, PrEP, TasP, and vaccines—yet how far we as civil society and researchers still have to go. And consider for a moment what World AIDS Day will mean for future generations . . . when we have done our due diligence as the generation to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

To a reflective World AIDS Day and a productive 2019,

Brian Minalga &
The Legacy Project

btg@hanc.info



HIV Prevention Trials Network (HPTN)

HPTN researchers recently announced results from [HPTN 075](#). This was a landmark study to see if it would be possible to conduct HIV prevention research with men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender women (TGW) in three African countries with varying levels of support for the LGBTQ community: Malawi, Kenya, and South Africa. Anti-LGBTQ bias exists in all three countries, but Malawi and Kenya also criminalize same-sex relationships. Findings from the study showed participants were alarmingly vulnerable to getting HIV—much more so than cisgender and heterosexual people in the same countries. A total of 401 MSM and TGW, regardless of HIV status, were enrolled. Each participant was followed for 12 months, during which five study visits were conducted. These visits included medical exams, collection of blood samples, and interviews to assess participants' susceptibility to HIV. Of the 401 participants enrolled, 329 were HIV-negative at the time of enrollment. By the end of the study, 21 of them had become HIV-positive. This translates to an overall incidence rate of 6.96 per 100 person-years, which is very high. Incidence rates differed substantially by study site: Malawi: 1.3; Kenya: 3.75; Soweto, South Africa: 8.97; and Cape Town, South Africa: 14.44. These findings highlight the need for additional HIV prevention research and support for MSM and TGW in sub-Saharan Africa.

HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN)

The HVTN has published its December 2018 issue of *Community Compass*. This issue highlights myths and facts about HIV vaccine research, describes important information related to HIV testing for HVTN study participants, and showcases some of the amazing people and research sites in the HVTN. The issue also includes a special feature article on apartheid, the HVTN RAMP Scholars program, and a special award received by Gita Ramjee, Director of the HIV Prevention Research Unit at the South African Medical Research Council. Check out the issue [here](#).

Microbicide Trials Network (MTN)

MTN researchers presented on a [range of topics](#) in more than 25 presentations and sessions at the 2018 HIV Research for Prevention (HIVR4P) meeting in Madrid, Spain. In one presentation, Sharon Achilles of Magee-Womens Research Institute presented encouraging results from the first clinical trial of a vaginal ring that releases the antiretroviral drug *dapivirine* as well as a contraceptive hormone. The ring, designed to provide protection against both HIV and

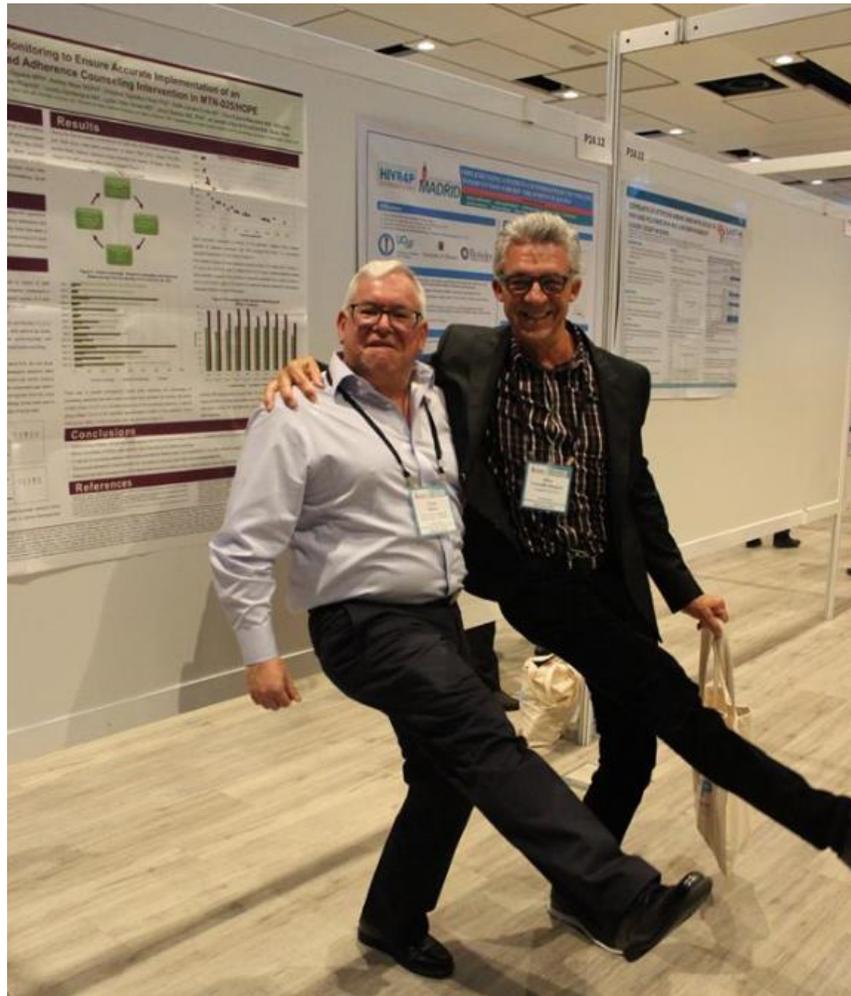
unintended pregnancy for a duration of three months, was found to be safe and well-tolerated. Given these results, MTN researchers have launched a second Phase I study of the dual-purpose ring. In another study, Urvi Parikh of the University of Pittsburgh presented on the risk of drug resistance with use of the dapivirine vaginal ring, finding no dapivirine-associated resistance among women who used the vaginal ring in MTN's [ASPIRE study](#). Press releases for these studies and others can be accessed in the [News Room](#) on the MTN web site. Access the [MTN Facebook page](#) for more photos from the meeting.



Members of the Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute Clinical Research Site at an HIVR4P poster session, where Krishnaveni Reddy (second from right) was presenting data from MTN's ASPIRE study.

MTN also co-hosted an HIVR4P satellite session, *Accelerating a Labor of Love: Time to transform HIV prevention for pregnant & breastfeeding women*. The session addressed the need to expand biomedical HIV prevention options during pregnancy and breastfeeding, periods known to increase HIV vulnerability for women and their infants. Recent findings from the [CHARISMA](#) pilot study were also shared at an HIVR4P satellite session, *Love, Power and PrEP: Addressing*

relationship dynamics and intimate partner violence to promote successful HIV prevention for women and girls. Elizabeth Montgomery from [RTI International](#) presented on how CHARISMA integrated HIV prevention with relationship skills-building and intimate partner violence counseling for participants in MTN's [HOPE study](#) of the dapivirine vaginal ring.



Iván Balán and Alex Carballo-Diéguez at an HIVR4P poster session, where Iván presented on adherence counseling in MTN's HOPE study.

In addition to these sessions, Craig Hendrix of Johns Hopkins University and Director of Rectal Microbicide Research at MTN, gave an impassioned plenary talk on the need for choice in HIV prevention products, available as an [HIVR4P web recording](#).

In non-HIVR4P news, MTN is pleased to announce that [MTN-033](#) has completed enrollment. This Phase 1 study was designed to evaluate how the antiretroviral

drug *dapivirine* moves through the body when administered rectally as a gel through two methods: an applicator and a coital simulation device, or dildo. The study included 16 participants at the Pittsburgh Clinical Research Site. Study results are anticipated in mid-2019. And, the [MTN-035](#) study has a new name: DESIRE (**D**eveloping and **E**valuating **S**hort-acting **I**nnovations for **R**ectal **U**se). The DESIRE study will evaluate the acceptability, tolerability, and adherence to a placebo douche, suppository, and fast-dissolving rectal tablet (insert) among cisgender and transgender men and transgender women. Stay tuned for a new logo for the study!

Office of HIV/AIDS Network Coordination (HANC)

The [Legacy Project](#) is back on the road! Please say hello to Brian Minalga, Louis Shackelford, and Russell Campbell at these upcoming conferences:

- December 3-4 in Los Angeles, CA: The [NMAC Biomedical HIV Prevention Summit](#)
- January 17-20 in Washington, DC: [The National African American Leadership Conference on HIV/AIDS and Social Justice](#)

The Legacy Project also played an integral role in developing the *Transgender Training Curriculum for HIV Research*. This curriculum is intended for research staff working in the NIH-funded HIV/AIDS Clinical Trials Networks, but anyone who wants to improve their awareness of the transgender community in the context of HIV is welcome to use it. The curriculum includes five training modules, and the first module has recently become available as an online training. This online course requires a Division of AIDS Learning Portal account, which can be created by clicking on “Request Account” [here](#). The other courses are currently available as in-person trainings but will be rolled out online soon.

HANC also hosted a couple webinars recently, recorded for your convenience:

- [Adolescent Research Update: An Overview of ACTG A5359 and the DREAMS Partnership](#)
- [Understanding HIV and Aging Part 1](#) (slides only—recording forthcoming)

Part 2 of the HIV and Aging webinar series will take place on December 5. Register [here](#)!