

Third national science symposium on HIV/AIDS: HIV Science 2010

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Sir,

YRG CARE is a non-profit medical and research institution located at Voluntary Health Services, Rajiv Gandhi Salai, Taramani, and is one of the premiere institutes that takes comprehensive medical care of persons with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection in southern India. The institute is associated with the international multi sites of NIH (USA), clinical trials for International AIDS Clinical Trial Group (ACTG) and HIV prevention trial network (HPTN), and has contributed more than 100 scientific research papers to the HIV medical literature. The institute is recognized by DSIR and the laboratory of infectious diseases is accredited by NABL (ISO15189:2007). Prof. Suniti Solomon, Director, documented the first evidence of HIV infection from India in 1986 from the Madras Medical College and Government General Hospital as a Professor of Microbiology.

The third consecutive yearly National Symposium on HIV/AIDS organized by Prof. Suniti Solomon MD, Founder Director of the YR Gaitonde Centre for AIDS Research and Education (YRG CARE) was held at Vigyan Auditorium, CSIR Campus, Taramani, Chennai, Tamil Nadu on 30th and 31st August 2010. There were about 450 delegates from all over the country. The theme for this conference was to bring together leading faculties/experts to provide an update on various aspects of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, which include

sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), tuberculosis and opportunistic infections.

The inaugural address was given by Thiru Shambhu Kallollikar, IAS, Project Director, TNSACS, Chennai. The key note address was delivered by Dr. R. S. Paranjape, Ph.D., Director, National AIDS Research Institute (NARI), ICMR, Pune. Dr. Rajat Goyal, MD, Country Director, International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), New Delhi, was the guest of honor. The symposium abstract CD was released by none other than Dr. S.P. Thyagarajan, Ph.D., DSc, the Former Vice Chancellor University of Madras and Pro Chancellor (research) Sri Ramachandra University, Chennai.

Then, it was followed by 14 scientific topics covered by eminent personalities in 2 days. On the first day, there were four sessions, the first being chaired by Dr. Reba Kanungo, MD, Ph.D., laboratory program advisor CDC-GAP, India, American consulate, Chennai, along with Dr. Paranjape. The topics were "The Indian and Global HIV epidemic" by Dr. Sunil Shuas Solomon, Ph.D., followed by "Understanding HIV pathogenesis and recent trends" by Dr. Paranjape, Ph.D., and "Impact of Antiretroviral Therapy on the Natural History of HIV Disease" by Dr. N. Kumaraswamy, Ph.D. Session 2 was chaired by Prof. Shantha, Ph.D., Former Director, Institute of Microbiology MMC and Research Institute, Chennai, along with Prof. Usman, Ph.D., Professor of Dermatology, Sri Ramachandra University Chennai for the topics: "HIV Testing: Pre and Post Test Counseling" by Prof. Suniti Solomon; "National/WHO recommendations on HIV testing and Blood safety" by Dr. Thara Francis, MD, Frontier Lifeline Hospital, Chennai; "HIV and Sexually transmitted Diseases" Dr. Usman; and "Co-infection: HIV and TB" by Dr. Manoharan, MD, Medical Director, I-TECH India Government Hospital Tambaram, Chennai. This was followed after lunch by Session 3, which was

chaired by Dr. Rajat Goyal, MD, IAVI, New Delhi, and Dr. Usha Anand Rao on the topics: "Lessons to learn from HIV vaccine failure" by Dr. Udaykumar Ranga, Ph.D., Professor, Molecular Biology and Genetics Unit JNCASR, Bangalore; "Challenges in HIV Preventive vaccine development" by Dr. V. D. Ramanathan, Ph.D., Deputy Director, Tuberculosis Research Centre (ICMR), Chennai; "HIV Vaccine Trial Current status and the way Forward" by Dr. Rajat Goyal, IAVI, New Delhi; and "Biomedical operations for HIV prevention" by Prof. Suniti Solomon. This was followed by Session 4 after tea break, which was chaired by Dr. Udaykumar Ranga, Ph.D., and Dr. Sunil K. Arora, Ph.D., on the following topics: "Cellular Immune defects in HIV Infection: with special reference to NK cells and pDC" by Dr. Sunil K. Arora, Additional Professor, PGIMER, Chandigarh; "HIV-1 Impairs *in vitro* priming of Naïve T cells and gives rise to contact-dependant suppressor T cells" by Dr. Karihans Fru Che, Ph.D., Scientist Linkoping University, Sweden; and "Biosignatures of negative T cell co-stimulation: unveiling additional preprints of immune abrogation in HIV disease" by Dr. E. M. Shankar, Ph.D, Sweden.

On the second day, of three scientific sessions, the first one was chaired by Prof. N. K. Mehra, AIIMS, New Delhi, and Prof. Thangam Menon, Ph.D., IBMS, University of Madras, Chennai, on "Opportunistic Infections in HIV-Mycotic infections" by Dr. Thanagm Menon; "Parasitic Opportunistic/Co-Infections in HIV" by Dr. Sitara Swarna Rao Ajjampur, MD, Christian Medical College, Vellore; "Immunogenetic Basis of HIV-1 infection, Transmission and Disease Progression" by Prof. N. K. Mehra, AIIMS, New Delhi; and "Parasitic infections and HIV-associated Immune Reconstitution inflammatory syndrome (IRIS) in Indian Scenario" by Prof. S. C. Parija, Ph.D., DSc, Director, JIPMER, Pondicherry. Session 2 was chaired by Dr. V. Kumaraswami and Prof. S. C. Parija on the following topics: "Co-Infection: HIV and Filariasis" by Dr. V. Kumaraswami, Ph.D., Director, Tuberculosis Research Centre (TRC), Chennai; "Drug Resistance in HIV and its current status among treated and untreated patients" by Dr. Saravanan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor,

YRG CARE; "POC testing for detection of Fungal OIs in recourse-limited settings" by Dr. Arun Balajee, Ph.D.; and "Newer Diagnostic methodologies in HIV/AIDS" by Dr. P. Balakrishnan, Ph.D., Associate Professor, YRG CARE. This was followed by Scientific Session 3 after a tea break. The chairs for this session were Prof. Suniti Solomon and Prof. S. P. Thyagarajan, on the topics: "HIV and Oral Manifestations" by Prof. Ranganathan, Ph.D., Department of Oral Pathology, Ragas Dental College, Chennai; "Bio-safety in healthcare setting – National/WHO guidelines" by Dr. Thara Francis, MD; "Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) in Health care settings" by Dr. Sunil Shuhas Solomon; "Emerging infectious diseases and future research" by Prof. S. P. Thyagarajan; and, finally, "Bioethics in HIV/AIDS Research" by Dr. Vasantha Muthuswamy, Former Senior Deputy Director General, ICMR, New Delhi.

In this symposium, altogether, there were 49 abstracts presented by the participating delegates, of which a total of 31 posters were on Basic HIV Science research whereas seven posters were from Clinical Science research and the remaining 11 posters were from Social Science research. As announced earlier, three best poster awards were selected by peer reviewers on the posters displayed in the conference. Our poster No. BS-29 was awarded the third best poster award. Overall, the symposium was a grand success as it had achieved the organizer's goal.

Finally, we wish to place on record our sincere gratitude and thanks to the YR Gaitonde Centre for AIDS Research and Education (YRG) Director Prof. Suniti Solomon and her entire team for their hospitality and enriching scientific experience.

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