International AIDS Society Will Host COVID-19 Prevention Conference in February

The second IAS COVID-19 virtual meeting will coincide with the HIV Research for Prevention Conference.

October 13, 2020 By Liz Highleyman

The International AIDS Society (IAS) has announced its second virtual COVID-19 meeting, this one devoted to prevention of SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes the new disease.

“Amidst global efforts to develop a vaccine, this conference will examine all aspects of SARS-CoV-2 infection prevention, including non-pharmaceutical interventions, active and passive immunization and related science,” said conference cochair and IAS past president Linda-Gail Bekker, MBChB, PhD, director of the Desmond Tutu HIV Centre at the University of Cape Town.

As co-chair and current IAS president Adeeba Kamarulzaman, MBBS, of the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, notes, many HIV professionals are currently leading the COVID-19 response and research on SARS-CoV-2 treatment and vaccines in their countries.

In the United States, long-time HIV researcher Anthony Fauci, MD, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, is the country’s leading scientific voice on COVID-19. Many HIV/AIDS advocates and organizations are also playing a role in the COVID-19 response.

The first IAS COVID-19 conference was held in conjunction with the virtual International AIDS Conference in July. The inaugural meeting covered a wide range of topics, including COVID-19 basic science, SARS-CoV-2 virology, immunology, testing and treatment, epidemiology, public health responses, and the economic, political and human rights implications of the new pandemic.

The second meeting, to be held on February 2 before the opening of the 4th HIV Research for Prevention Conference (HIVR4P), will focus more narrowly on prevention topics, ranging from biomedical interventions such as vaccines to so-called non-pharmaceutical—that is, behavioral and social—approaches. The meeting will also cover issues of public policy and global access to new interventions.

“As multiple vaccine trials are being conducted globally, it is essential to take stock, scrutinize

efforts to date for their scientific validity, be clear about what works and what doesn't, and deduce the implications for policymakers around the world," Bekker said.

In addition to Bekker and Kamarulzaman, the conference organizing committee includes Susan Buchbinder, MD, of the University of California at San Francisco; Beatriz Grinsztejn, MD, PhD, of Fundação Oswaldo Cruz in Brazil; HIV cure researcher Sharon Lewin, PhD, of the University of Melbourne; and Jennifer Kates,PhD, of the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

The February conference has yet to announce its program or speakers, but if the first meeting is any indication, it could feature some big names. The July meeting included virtual appearances by Fauci; World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, PhD; Peter Piot, MD, PhD, director of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and himself a COVID-19 survivor; Bill Gates of the Gates Foundation; and renowned primate researcher Jane Goodall, PhD.

Registration for the COVID-19 Conference will open on November 4. Those registered for HIVR4P will be automatically registered for the COVID-19 meeting. Prevention research submissions will be accepted from October 27 through November 24.

For more information about the COVID-19 Conference: Prevention, visit covid19.iasociety.org.

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