

HIV and AIDS Report from Toronto

The XVI International Conference on AIDS.

If anything “significant” marked the XVI International Conference on AIDS, it was the lack of any real news regarding treatment and prevention of HIV and AIDS. As expected, no new announcements were made regarding vaccine research and development. The consensus is that an effective vaccine is still many years away. Prevention and “harm reduction” continued to be key components of the conference, with calls for more funding for programs that focus on prevention efforts, while the “ABC” approach (Abstinence, Be faithful, and Condom use) was denounced by many as naive. Providing women with tools to protect themselves was a core theme in addresses given by former president Bill Clinton and by Bill and Melinda Gates. This year marked a partnership between the International AIDS Society and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that provided more scholarships for delegates from the developing world than any previous conference.

Though there were no available statistics on how many of the 30,000 delegates and presenters



Nkhenseni Mvasa, left, from the Treatment Action Campaign of South Africa, and Ron Rosenes, vice chair of XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto. At the closing session on August 18, Mvasa addressed the conference delegates on behalf of HIV-positive people in rural Africa, whose civil rights, she said, “are being violated every day, every second, every minute.”

Courtesy of AIDS 2006

were nurses, an adjunct symposium sponsored and organized by the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) attracted approximately 50 attendees.

In the 25 years since AIDS was first described clinically, it has evolved from a death sentence, which left those diagnosed with only months to live, to more of a chronic condition. Nurses who specialized in providing care to those living with HIV and AIDS have been at the forefront of this evolution.

According to, Kevin Mallinson, PhD, RN, AACRN, there is a distinct shift in attitude among patients with AIDS. Mallinson asserts that because many who are newly diagnosed today appear to perceive the disease as a long-term, chronic disease rather than a death sentence, they often are less likely to follow clinicians’

advice or adhere strictly to drug treatment. Many patients have an almost laissez-faire approach to treatment, he says.

Finally, as with the rest of the nursing population, a large number of nurses who specialize in HIV and AIDS will be retiring within the decade, causing a shortage within the specialty. However, a positive note from the conference came from the announcement that Adele Webb, RN, executive director of the ANAC, will be a member of the planning committee for the 2008 International Conference on AIDS, to be held in Mexico City. Many of the nurses in attendance expressed hope that this will lead to a more visible presence of HIV and AIDS nursing at the mainstream conference, as well as give greater recognition to the role nurses have played in this pandemic.—Geneviève M. Clavreul, PhD, RN ▼



Thousands of delegates fill the streets of Toronto to rally for AIDS treatment.

Courtesy of AIDS 2006