

Epidemiologic Studies for HIV Prevention Research in Bangkok, Thailand

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Project Description: This project consists of three studies:

(1) Assessment of HIV incidence and risk behaviors among clients seeking HIV testing in Bangkok

This study is being conducted at the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Center (TCRARC) among male and female clients of the Anonymous HIV Testing Clinic. The objectives of this study are: (1) To estimate population incidence in newly identified cases of HIV-1 infection in individuals seeking HIV testing using the Calypte HIV-1 BED enzyme immunoassay (BED-EIA) test on venous samples; (2) To identify groups at high risk of newly acquiring HIV by assessing associated HIV risk behaviors with incident HIV infections using an anonymous interviewer-administered questionnaire linked to de-identified venous samples (3) To develop an archive of clinical specimens that may be utilized for future research projects related to newly identified HIV infections, such as transmission of antiretroviral drug resistance. This study will inform prevention programs and prevention research regarding risk and target populations.

(2) Public HIV Prevention Education and Survey of Willingness to Participate in HIV Prevention Trials

This project will develop culturally and linguistically appropriate HIV prevention educational materials aimed at a specialized target population: clients attending the TCRARC Anonymous HIV Testing Clinic. Following the distribution and review of these materials with the target population, the study will identify which HIV prevention methods are most acceptable and of interest to the target population, utilizing a brief anonymous survey. The survey will also assess willingness of the target population to participate in future HIV prevention trials conducted by the Thai Red Cross. This information will be used to plan and prepare for a possible future trial of chemoprophylaxis for HIV prevention in this population and locale.

(3) Community participatory activities in preparation for HIV prevention trials in women in Thailand

This work supports the planning phases for an HIV Prevention Clinical Trial of antiretroviral chemoprophylaxis in Thai women at risk for HIV. The proposed study agents are reverse transcriptase inhibitors that are licensed for the treatment of established HIV-1 infection by the US FDA. Participants include leaders and members of CBOs, NGOs, religious organizations, other Thai HIV prevention and therapeutic research groups, and governmental organizations such as the Thai Ministry of Health. The work includes convening and chairing general discussions and specific working groups with community leaders, who will identify optimal approaches for introducing at-risk populations to current and novel HIV prevention technologies and chemoprophylaxis studies. Other topics for discussion include trial design and procedures, content of educational materials, appropriate materials and procedures for obtaining informed consent of participants, effective strategies for subject recruitment, and social and scientific issues specific to HIV prevention chemoprophylactic interventions such as behavioral disinhibition, social benefits and harms associated with trial participation.

Significance: These studies form a comprehensive approach to facilitating discussion and fostering conditions that are required to implement a successful and fully enrolled chemoprophylaxis trial with a high retention rate. The epidemiology and laboratory studies provide essential biological information. If a chemoprophylaxis trial can be successfully implemented and the drug shows evidence of efficacy, it could have significant impact on the HIV epidemic in Thailand and perhaps worldwide.

Project End Date: June 2007