

HIV CLINICIANS SOCIETY SOUTHERN AFRICAN IMPERATIVES

The Southern African HIV Clinicians Society has an imperative to enable greater access to quality HIV care. It represents medical professionals who are involved in HIV/AIDS care within the region and serves as the Specialist Interest Group for HIV/AIDS to the South African Medical Association.

As a relatively new organisation, established in 1998, the Society has grown in membership, influence and reputation to become active in a number of forums, representing the care needs of HIV-infected individuals, as well as advancing scientific and professional programmes for its members.

The Society's mission is to respond to the Profession's needs, undertaking supportive, facilitating and advocacy activities that will enable clinicians to better manage the clinical, public health and research demands of HIV and AIDS, and increasing the capacity of the profession to respond more effectively to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

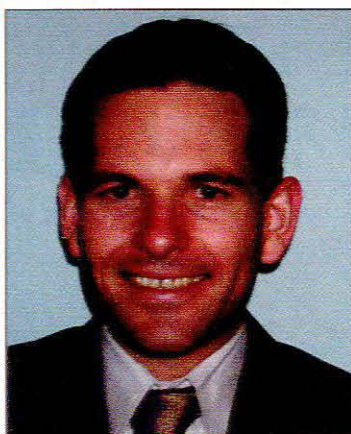
A number of important services and initiatives have been planned and implemented over recent months, including the production of this journal, as well as the consensus guidelines for antiretroviral therapy that appear in this edition. Tuberculosis prevention guidelines were recently published and appeared in the *AIDS Forum* section of the *South African Medical Journal*, to which the Society has had an ongoing commitment. Recommendations for the management of opportunistic and other HIV-associated conditions were also compiled by the Society for the South African Department of Health and these are expected to be published in due course. The details of a programme to support HIV antiretroviral treatment by less experienced clinicians, based on the Clinical Guidelines of the Society, will also be announced soon.

The Society is a partner in developing an Internet portal, 'www.hiv.co.za' that will become Southern Africa's main resource and point of entry to HIV/AIDS services on the Web, serving as an increasingly useful platform for the Society's educational, networking and clinical support services.

Continuing Medical Education meetings are currently held each month in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban and are planned for other regions in the near future. Training opportunities are being developed that will lead to formal accreditation in HIV Medicine, and a credentialling mechanism that will enable an accredited preferred provider network to be established is being planned, in partnership with IAPAC.

The network of accredited HIV Clinicians is being put in place and an innovative logistical model for this has been developed, with the vision that this will enable the profession in the region to demonstrate that it has the logistical and infrastructural capacity through which to deliver high-quality care at lower cost, in order to bring down the costs of HIV drugs, laboratory and ancillary services. This is seen as a fundamental process in achieving greater levels of access for individuals who are HIV-infected.

Strategic partnerships are seen as important to the Society's future growth and success and the Society looks forward to working closely with the International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care (IAPAC) and other stakeholders in the region to improve HIV prevention, treatment, care and support extended to the rapidly increasing numbers of HIV-infected and AIDS-affected individuals. This is the Society's imperative and a challenge that cannot be ignored.



SHAUN CONWAY
Executive Director

IAPAC: BATTLING COMPLACENCY, ADVANCING COMMITMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

In a move that is seen as a significant commitment to battling the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Southern Africa, the International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care (IAPAC) has announced that it will be strengthening its representation and involvement in the region by appointing Dr Shaun Conway as Executive Director to head its operations in Southern Africa and by establishing a regional office in Johannesburg.

This is part of the organisation's global commitment to changing the course of the HIV pandemic through mobilising physicians and

other agencies that are involved in HIV/AIDS care towards greater levels of activity and more effective prevention, treatment and care strategies.

It is hoped that by enabling effective actions and strategies, this will impact on many more of the millions of people living with HIV infection globally, many of whom lack access to essential healthcare services, life-sustaining drugs, diagnostic technologies and humane care.

Southern Africa presents a particularly urgent and high-priority area where more co-ordinated, innovative, sustained and stronger efforts are needed to deal with its exploding epidemic that is the fastest growing in the world.

IAPAC will work closely with the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society and other local and international agencies to fulfill its mission, which is to prevent HIV infection and to maximize the survival and quality of life of all people affected by HIV/AIDS and its resultant life-threatening co-infectious diseases.

IAPAC's objectives are to assist in developing and implementing effective strategies that lead to:

- Increased access to drugs and related technologies for all people living with HIV/AIDS and life-threatening co-infectious diseases
- Reduced transmission and acquisition of HIV and life-threatening co-infectious diseases
- Enhanced capacity amongst healthcare workers to provide treatment, care and support to HIV-infected adults, adolescents and children based on the most current and appropriate guidelines, which are made more accessible
- Protection of the human rights of all people at risk for and living with HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening co-infectious diseases.

IAPAC will bring to the region the support of its more than 10 000 members across the globe, together with educational resources (publications, training and conferences), public policy initiatives (working with government and non-government agencies to advance advocacy and human rights issues), and model programme development that is designed to demonstrate more effective ways in which to meet these objectives in a way that will strengthen HIV/AIDS care in the region.

IAPAC hopes to build strong partnerships through its physician members in the region, with the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society and other key stakeholders in Southern Africa, so as to achieve the highest possible degree of co-ordinated impact.

For further information about IAPAC, or to apply for membership, visit www.iapac.org