Nigeria: CRH Takes HIV Awareness Drive to Shomolu from allafrica.com

As the world basks in the euphoria of the latest HIV vaccine, the Center for the Right to Health (CRH) kicked off an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign in Shomolu Local Government area of Lagos aimed at creating, strengthening and supporting the adoption of healthy reproductive lifestyle and HIV prevention behaviour among the poor and Most At-Risk Populations (MARPs).

In partnership with Society for Family Health (SFH) and funded by the Department for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the programme tagged; “Comprehensive Integrated Approach to HIV Prevention and Care in Nigeria (CIHPAC) Programme” is also aimed at promoting greater awareness of risk associated with unprotected sex, increased knowledge about HIV, STIs and positive attitude towards risk reduction behaviours has it target groups at the community levels.

Programme Officer, CRH, Mrs. Christy Ekeratte-Udoh said CIHPAC is a four and half year programme, is to increase behaviours conducive to the prevention of HIV/STI transmission among MARPs, create an enabling environment for behaviour change and programme sustainability in collaboration with other partners, reduce stigma and discrimination against People Living with HIV/AIDS as well as increase access to HCT services.

"To really promote change of behaviour in thee live of the school youths, we are looking at male out of school from 18 to 30 years because they are sexually active so we are encouraging them to use condoms if they must have sex."

The CRH Programme Officer, gave kudos to HIV awareness campaigns in the country noting that the message of hope has spread across the country. "We have taught them about the various creams for the penis, various creams for the vagina. Everyone of them came out to demonstrate how to wear it and those that didn't wear it well were taught because they are learning.

We expect at the end of the day, we must have passed on greater awareness, the community people are aware of different ways of preventing HIV, STI, and the community has assumed ownership of the project and are able to talk about HIV and its relative infections.

To access the article online, go to http://allafrica.com/stories/200909290602.html

Nigerian media filled with story on new vaccine to prevent HIV from afriquejet.com

Lagos, Nigeria - Following the devastating effect of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa, the news that a vaccine which could prevent the disease has been discovered in far away Thailand, was the focal point of Nigerian media this past week.

The GUARDIAN, writing under the headline "New vaccine raises hope of HIV prevent ion", reported that excitement was high over an experimental vaccine, which has prevented infection with the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) virus.

It said that recent failures had led many scientists to think that such a vaccine might never be possible. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Agency on AIDS (UNAIDS) said the results "instilled new hope" in the field of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) vaccine research.

The vaccine - a combination of two previously unsuccessful vaccines - cut the risk of becoming infected with HIV by more than 31 per cent in the world’s largest AIDS vaccine trial of more than 16,000 volunteers in Thailand, researchers announced in Bangkok.

Even though the benefit is modest, "it's the first evidence that we could have a safe and effective preventive vaccine," said Col. Jerome Kim, who led the study for the US Army, which sponsored it with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

This article continues on page 2 . . .
"Nigerian media filled with story on new vaccine to prevent HIV" continued, from page 1

"Vaccine for prevention of HIV discovered" was the headline of the NIGERIAN TRIBUNE, which reported that for the first time, an experimental vaccine has prevented infection with the HIV virus, a watershed event in the deadly epidemic and a surprising result.

The paper quoted the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (a co-sponsor of the production), Dr. Anthony Fauci, as saying that "this is not the end of the road. I am surprised and very pleased by the outcome.

"It gives me cautious optimism about the possibility of improving this result and developing a more effective AIDS vaccine. It will take time and resources to fully analyse and understand the data, but there is little doubt that this finding will energise and redirect the AIDS vaccine field.

"The Thai Ministry of Public Health conducted the study, which used strains of HIV common in Thailand. Whether such a vaccine would work against other strains in the US, Africa or elsewhere in the world is unknown." The SUN wrote "Vaccine to prevent HIV infection confirmed", saying that a vaccine to prevent the HIV infection, the virus that leads to AIDS, has shown modest results for the first time, raising hopes that a disease that kills millions every year may someday be beaten.

According to the SUN, "In what is being called the world’s largest HIV vaccine trial ever, involving more than 16,000 participants in Thailand, researchers found that people who received a series of inoculations of a prime vaccine and booster vaccine were 31 per cent less likely to get HIV, compared with those on a placebo."

"Scientists Discover HIV Prevention Vaccine", wrote the DAILY INDEPENDENT, which said the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) said the results "instilled new hope".

The WHO and UNAIDS noted in a joint statement that, "The study results, representing a significant scientific advance, are the first demonstration that a vaccine can prevent HIV infection in a general adult population and are of great importance. Some 33 million people around the world have HIV, the INDEPENDENT wrote, saying that details of the US$ 105 million study will be given at a vaccine conference in Paris, France, in October.

THISDAY's headline read "Researchers Discover Vaccine for HIV", saying that researchers found that the vaccine reduced by nearly a third the risk of contracting HIV, the virus that leads to AIDS. In other stories under the headline: "Amnesty: Crude Oil Output to Hit 2mbpd", THISDAY reported that Nigeria’s daily crude oil production, which had dropped below 1.3 million barrels per day in the wake of the Niger Delta crisis, is set to hit 2 million barrels per day (bpd), quoting Foreign Minister, Ojo Maduekwe.

The escalation of violence in the Niger Delta region in the last three years had reduced Nigeria's daily output, which stood at about 2.6 million bpd, by half. However, the implementation of the Federal Government amnesty to militants in the region last month pushed oil production to about 1.7 mbpd, the highest in 16 months.

Group Managing Director, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Dr. Mohammed Barkindo, who confirmed the figure during a recent working visit to Utorogu Gas Plant in Ughelli, Delta State, said the rise in oil and gas production in the country was a visible reflection of the relative peace that had returned to the troubled region following the take-off of the amnesty on 6 August.

In its story on lingering university strike in Nigeria, the DAILY TRUST wrote "ASUU strike: Oshiomhole moves in to break deadlock". The paper said another serious effort to break the deadlock between striking university teachers and the Federal Government kicked off during the week when veteran labour leader and now Governor of the South South Edo State, Adams Oshiomhole, began mediation talks with the Minister of Education, Dr. Sam Egwu.

Oshiomhole announced in Abuja that he accepted to be drafted by President Umaru Yar’adua to intervene in the protracted dispute between the government and the university workers. "I think everybody realises that the strike can’t go on forever," Oshiomhole said shortly after meeting with Egwu.

"I will meet the three university labour unions to find a common ground for them and the government," Oshiomhole, a former president of the Nigeria Labour Congress, said.

He was drafted by the President after the university staffers rebuffed efforts by the Gomarry Onosode-led government team, the labour and education ministers, federal lawmakers, as well as vice chancellors, pro-chancellors and chancellors of universities.

To access the article online, go to http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2009-09/mtn-vs091609.php
GLOBAL: First positive results from an HIV vaccine from plusnews.org

JOHANNESBURG, 24 September 2009 (PlusNews) - A six-year clinical trial in Thailand has yielded the first ever evidence that an AIDS vaccine can provide some protection against HIV infection. The trial team in Bangkok, Thailand’s capital announced on 24 September that rates of HIV infection were 31 percent lower in trial participants who got the vaccine than in those who received a placebo.

“These new findings represent an important step forward in HIV vaccine research,” said Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the main funder of the trial.

The study, known as RV144, began enrolling 16,000 HIV-negative men and women between the ages of 18 and 30 in October 2003. Half the volunteers received a placebo; the other half were given shots containing two different vaccines. The first, called ALVAC-HIV, used a disabled form of a bird virus known as canary pox to deliver synthetic versions of three HIV genes into the body. The second, called AIDSVAX, was composed of a genetically engineered version of an HIV protein.

The synthetic HIV components in both vaccines were based on subtypes B and E of the virus, which are most common in Thailand, the US and Europe. Scientists do not yet know whether the vaccine would be effective against other strains, such as subtype C, which is most prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa.

The trial was designed to evaluate whether the combined vaccines lowered HIV infection risk, and whether they had any impact on viral load [the amount of HIV circulating in the bloodstream] in the volunteers who became infected.

Of 8,197 people given the vaccine regimen, 51 became infected, compared to 74 of the 8,198 volunteers who received the placebo. This result is considered “statistically significant”, meaning that the difference is unlikely to be a coincidence. The vaccine did not have any effect on viral load.

"Today's result is not the beginning of the end of the epidemic, it's the end of the beginning of finding an AIDS vaccine. It's a thrilling moment," Mitchell Warren, executive director of the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC), told IRIN/PlusNews on the phone from New York. However, he emphasized that additional studies and analysis were needed to confirm and understand the findings.

The vaccine's modest effectiveness means it is unlikely to be licensed or produced in large quantities in Thailand, where the rate of HIV infection is relatively low. However, Prof Gavin Churchyard, CEO of the Aurum Institute, a non-profit medical research organization based in South Africa, said even an AIDS vaccine that was only 30 percent effective could have an impact in southern Africa, where HIV infection rates are much higher, "but we would need to know if it would work in this population".

Churchyard said the results had come as a surprise to many in the vaccine field. "We weren't actually expecting a positive result," he commented. Previous efficacy trials of AIDSVAX, the second vaccine in the regimen, had found no benefit and the decision to go ahead with the large-scale trial in Thailand had generated controversy.

Warren noted that vaccine science had evolved considerably since the trial was launched in 2003. "There are new ideas and approaches that no one imagined six years ago. Anytime you start a trial, it's like buying a new computer - it's outdated before you even get it out of the box." He added that whether or not the approach used in the trial was determined to be the most effective, the findings would still influence future strategies.

Good news at last
The positive results from the Thai trial are expected to give a crucial boost to a field in desperate need of good news after a series of setbacks in recent years. A four-continent trial of a vaccine developed by pharmaceutical company Merck was halted in 2007 after preliminary results suggested that it not only did not provide protection against HIV, but might actually increase the risk of infection.

This article continues on page 4 . . .
Dr Glenda Gray of the Perinatal HIV Research Unit (PHRU) at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, chief investigator in the South African arm of the Merck vaccine trial, told IRIN/PlusNews the outcome in Thailand was "a huge step forward - it opens up the field again and gives us an indication that this [a vaccine] is possible."

The results are also significant for the future of two HIV vaccines that began small-scale human trials in South Africa in July. One of the vaccines uses components from the family of pox viruses similar to those used in one of the Thai vaccines. "It means, hopefully, there'll be more interest in our vaccine," said Gray, the lead investigator of the trials being conducted by the South African AIDS Vaccine Initiative (SAAVI) and NIAID.

"We are planning a larger trial next year and having these results makes it much easier for us to convince funders to go ahead with the next phase," Gray said.

More information on the Thai trial results will be presented at an AIDS vaccine meeting in Paris in October.