Dear AITRP trainees, alumni, and partners:

Since its inception in mid-1990s, VU AITRP has played a pivotal role in building capacity of public health professionals in HIV/AIDS prevention efforts in Pakistan. To date, more than 1,200 persons from all parts of the country associated with Provincial and Federal Health Department of Ministry of Health, non-governmental organizations, private practitioners and those from academic institutes have been trained in HIV/AIDS prevention strategies, STI management, research methods, proposal writing, etc., through AITRP support. In the past decade, faculty members from Vanderbilt University and University of Alabama at Birmingham have themselves visited Pakistan and conducted some of these trainings. Seven long-term trainees have successfully completed doctorate or masters in public health and are now contributing in the country. Nearly 25 short-term trainees have also attended the summer course in the United States with AITRP support. In the future, AITRP will continue to build research capacity in Pakistan and include TB/HIV as a new emerging area for treatment and prevention efforts in the country.

-- Dr. Arshad Altaf

Current AITRP trainees from Pakistan

Dr. Ashraf Memon (M) is currently enrolled in the LSHTM MSc in Infectious Disease distance learning program. Dr. Memon is Chief Pathologist at the Sindh AIDS Control Program in Karachi, Pakistan. He is mentored by Dr. Shah and Dr. Altaf.

Dr. Rabnawaz Samo (M) is currently enrolled in the MSc in Epidemiology and Biostatistics program at Aga Kahn University. Dr. Samo was a Field Coordinator for the TB-HIV component, GFATM Round-6, Bridge Consultants Foundation in Karachi.

Dr. Anees Ur Rehman Siddiqui (M) is currently enrolled in the MPH program at Vanderbilt. He was the NGO Coordinator at Sindh AIDS Control Program. He aims to conduct cross sectional studies to develop profiles of clients of commercial sex workers in Karachi. The findings will help fill the knowledge gaps about clients of commercial sex workers. Also, they will help to develop appropriate interventions to curtail the spread of HIV infection. Finally, the study will pave the way for similar kind of studies in other parts of the country.

Dr. Arshad Altaf (AITRP alumnus 1999) was recently appointed the Senior Training Coordinator at BRIDGE. Dr. Altaf is available for mentorship to current AITRP trainees and alumni about research opportunities, assisting with proposal and manuscript development, and conducting in-country training. Dr. Altaf comes to us with many years of experience in HIV/TB surveillance such as the HIV/AIDS Surveillance Project based in Sindh and the AIDS Control Programme in Karachi, Pakistan. He has been working in HIV/AIDS for the past 8 years and has contributed substantially on national issues particularly the surge of HIV epidemic among IDUs and/or as the master trainer for second generation surveillance. He has published in several peer-reviewed journals and was also the editor of a special supplement of the Journal of Pakistan Medical Association (locally indexed journal) in 2005. He has also worked as a rapporteur for national and international conferences such as the annual meeting of SIGN/WHO alliance and the XVI International AIDS Conference. Dr. Altaf is a dedicated AIDS activist striving to make a change in Pakistan.

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Dr. Syed Abdul Mujeeb, a pioneer of AIDS and hepatitis B and C research in Pakistan, was an Associate Professor and in charge of the Blood Bank at Jinnah Post Graduate Medical Centre in Karachi at the time of his death in September 2009.

Dr. Mujeeb had published several papers in peer-reviewed journals on these topics that are frequently referenced and used in program planning by local and international stakeholders.

When Dr. Mujeeb joined the Blood Bank services, the facility was at serious risk for blood borne disease transmission due to its high volume of commercial blood donors.

Through strategic planning, Dr. Mujeeb was able to streamline the services offered at the Blood Bank, and promote the idea of voluntary blood donation.

At the time of his death, the services offered at the Blood Bank of Jinnah Post Graduate Centre were one of the best in the country.

In 2005, Dr. Mujeeb was selected as an AITRP fellow to pursue an MSc in Epidemiology from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. He successfully completed in 2007, and mentored numerous budding researchers and public health professionals in Pakistan, including the Sindh AIDS Control Program.

In 2008 he was awarded the “Sitar-e-Pakistan” (Star of Pakistan), one of highest civil awards of the country.

Friends and family always admired him as a gentle soul with a great sense of humor. He was known for calling “commercial sex workers” as “sex commercial workers;” if corrected, his reply was “my friend, sex always comes first.”

Dr. Mujeeb’s research and technical expertise in AIDS and hepatitis will always be remembered, not only in Pakistan, but also with his friends and colleagues at VIGH.

The Advocacy Seminar on HIV/AIDS and Dr. Syed Abdul Mujeeb Memorial Lecture, organized by Sindh AIDS Control Program and BRIDGE Consultants Foundation, was held in Karachi, Pakistan on December 4, 2009.

From left: Prof. Shahana Urooj, Prof. Atta u Rehman, Dr. Sharaf Shah, Dr. Nasir Jalbani at the Mujeeb Memorial Lecture in December 2009.
Our AITRP sponsored Dr. Zafar Iqbal Toor, TB/HIV and MDR Coordinator in Pakistan, recently visited the TB/HIV Research Program in Zambia.

The program in Zambia is spearheaded by Dr. Stewart Reid, CIDRZ Medical Director and Associate Professor of Medicine with the Division of Infectious Disease at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

The TB team at CIDRZ has experience over the past three years in Lusaka and three other provinces with implementing TB/HIV integration programs including improving HIV testing in TB patients, improving TB case detection in HIV-infected patients, linking TB and HIV care (ART) services, and improving clinical care of TB/HIV co-infected patients.

Subsequently, we sponsored Dr. Reid and his colleague, Jennifer Harris, epidemiologist/data manager and one of the primary architects of the rural TB/HIV program in Zambia, for a training visit to Pakistan in March 2009.

Drs. Reid and Harris accompanied our collaborators at BRIDGE and the Director of the TB Control Program in Pakistan to TB/HIV field sites.

They also served as primary lecturers at two TB/HIV co-infection conferences, one tailored for TB/HIV Field Officers, ARV Centre Staff, DOTS Staff, and Lab Staff, and another specifically for faculty and scientists at the Dow University of Health Sciences in Karachi.

Dr. Sharaf Ali Shah, center, Dr. Stewart Reid, and Jennifer Harris at the National Workshop on HIV/AIDS and TB Programme Management in Pakistan

In partnership with Dr. Anita Zaidi at Aga Khan University, and PI of the Infectious Diseases and Child Health in Pakistan Research Training Program, Dr. Vermund and VU-AITRP alumni Drs. Asad Ali and Momin Kazi served as lead instructors for a grant writing workshop in March 2010.

Grant writing workshop held in Karachi

Dr. Sarah Saleem, Associate Professor, Head of Population and Reproductive Health Program at Aga Khan University, and VIGH's Dr. Sten Vermund
AITRP sponsors data management workshop

BRIDGE lead an AITRP-sponsored course, entitled “Advanced Short Course on Data Management and Analysis,” at the Institute of Nursing, Dow University of Health Sciences in Karachi, Pakistan, from March 8-10, 2010.

This three-day workshop emphasized the importance of data management skills in research and teaching. The participants were a blend of public health professionals, faculty members from the department of community medicine from public sector medical schools, PhD students, nurses and representatives of NGOs working in HIV/AIDS.

Special emphasis during the training was given to developing data entry files and how to convert them for basic analysis such as producing frequencies or means and standard deviation. The majority of the time, however, was spent providing hands-on practice on SPSS.

Vanderbilt-CIDRZ AITRP Trainee Publications


Mujeeb SA, Pearce MS. Temporal trends in hepatitis B and C infection in family blood donors from interior Sindh, Pakistan. BMC Infect Dis 2008;8:43. PMID: 18402660


Research Productivity

Dr. Sharaf Ali Shah is currently serving as co-investigator for a Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria project: PKS-607-G06-T-SR-BRIDGE.

*Remember to acknowledge the Vanderbilt-CIDRZ AITRP grant (D43TW001035) in publications that are a result of AITRP-sponsored research or mentoring.
*Remember all articles arising from NIH funds must be submitted to PubMed Central upon acceptance for publication. Go to http://publicaccess.nih.gov