

Chin Wag hits Botswana

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The ninth AIDS Impact Conference, held in Gaborone, Botswana in September, provided a platform for social researchers and community project workers to profile research and data which supports interventions in the HIV response.

Delegates from 67 countries attended, among them Brent Beadle from NAPWA, who contributed a poster presentation about the Treataware CHIN WAG chat shows, describing them as a useful model for information dissemination and health literacy promotion.

Here Brent gives his impressions of the Conference.

I shared the motel shuttlebus from the Sir Seretse Khama airport with an engineer on his way to a gold mine up north. 'Trouble at mines,' he said. 'I see,' I said and thought about the men living in that close proximity. So even before getting out of the van and into conference mode, I anticipated hearing research data about that very phenomenon.

At the opening plenary, [UNAIDS](#) [1] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS is the main advocate for accelerated, comprehensive and coordinated global action on the epidemic. Regional Director, Mark Stirling, described Botswana's HIV response as one that had been steadfast with 'discipline and modesty'. An outcome emphasised by the reduction in mother to child transmission rates from 40% in 2004 to 3% in 2008. the focus of a satellite

Curiously absent in this talk was any mention of men who have sex with men (MSM) in Africa. In a tidy overview of gay men and HIV in the world, Professor John de Wit from University of NSW National Centre for HIV Social Research established that there were MSM present in the locale. The recognition brought a small ripple of applause from the packed auditorium.

Various local delegates raised the issue of sex in Africa being particularly secretive and taboo. One delegate asked 'how do you do sexual health research in countries where homosexuality is illegal?'

That Africa is not perceived as a giant research laboratory was the focus of a satellite session on 'Ethics of [Clinical](#) [2] Pertaining to or founded on observation and treatment of participants, as distinguished from theoretical or basic science. Research'. Given the amount of research in the region, participants were eager to debate human rights issues and [informed consent](#) [3] The process of learning the key facts about a clinical trial before deciding whether or not to participate. It is also a continuing process throughout the study to provide information for participants. To help someone decide whether or not to participate, the doctors and nurses involved in the trial explain the details of the study. programs protecting trial participants.

The developing countries at the conference tended to focus on transmission (an incentive from the UN is to reduce transmissions in Africa by 50% by 2015). Preventatives that will and will not work were reviewed, as was treatment access (a Universal Access Report is pending).

Wealthier countries with a gay male impetus talked about the changing gay communities and how usual 'watering holes' are no longer socialising strongholds. This appears to be a major pattern in the big cities around the world. Data about the number of gay men using the internet to meet men for sex (MISM) and the uses of these new technologies in research were both discussed. Activities as diverse as online testing for sexually transmitted diseases and mobile telemedicine were profiled.

As well as formal sessions, there was a lot of earnest discussion held in hallways amongst small clusters of conference goers. Some of the more popular topics included positive sexual dissatisfaction and dysfunction, and a time space sampling of activities of sex on premises venue clientele.

The use of crystal meth by gay men with HIV and [Hep](#) [4]Any inflammation of the liver. It is usually caused by viral infection, toxic agents or drugs but may be an autoimmune response. It is characterised by jaundice, abdominal pain, liver enlargement and sometimes fever. The different types of viral hepatitis include hepatitis A (formerly called infectious hepatitis), hep B (serum hepatitis), hep C (formerly called non-A, non-B hepatitis), and hepatitis D, E, F and G. C was also highlighted with discussion centred on the damage caused by increasing use of crystal meth in the gay, urban population and the impact of the subsequent behaviours on physical and mental health, relationships, employment and social environments.

A qualitative study presented included narratives from older men living with HIV. There was also a paper calling for a palliative care approach that moved away from the life of the [virus](#) [5]A small infective organism which is incapable of reproducing outside a host cell. to the life of the host – spiritually, emotionally, physically and socially.

Abstracts from the conference can be viewed at www.aidsimpact.com [6]

- [conference reports](#)
- [news](#)
- [The global HIV epidemic](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/396>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/475>

[3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/496>

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/97>

[5] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/125>

[6] <http://www.aidsimpact.com>