

Rethinking **AIDS**

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India holds AIDS reappraisal conference

Government and university officials encourage, attend, participate.

JUST BEFORE THE upcoming July World AIDS Conference in South Africa started looking like it might give the HIV-AIDS critics its first serious hearing, India convened a full-fledged AIDS reappraisal summit on January 30 and 31. The meeting rivaled the 1997 Colombian conference (*RA* Feb-Mar 1998) in terms of attendance, official approval, and favorable publicity. Entitled the "International Conference on the Validity of HIV/AIDS Programs, Including Methods of Testing," the government-sanctioned event attracted 100 attendees and took place at the Public Health Institute in Nagpur, Maharashtra, in central India. A cadre of journalists from the nation's leading media outlets covered the event prominently and accurately, according to Roberto Giraldo, MD, who attended as the RA Group's Board representative.

Giraldo presented lectures on the inaccuracy of the tests for HIV and the non-HIV causes of AIDS, such as drugs and malnutrition. Two other RA Group members traveled internationally to participate: French research physician Etienne de Harven (*RA* Nov-Dec 1998) lectured on HIV purification and isolation; and German physician Claus Kohnlein discussed the toxicity of anti-HIV medications. Most of the attendees were Indian physicians and medical scientists, including Indian representatives to the World Health Organization.

"Our conference coincided with an orthodox AIDS conference also in Nagpur, organized by the Indian Academy of Medical Sciences," Giraldo says. "Yet ours dominated the mainstream print and broadcast news. The papers and magazines ran headlines on their front pages and covers, such as: 'Divergent views on cause of AIDS trigger controversy;' 'Is HIV the cause of AIDS? Two events have contradictory views;' 'Dogmatic views of the West challenged at conference on AIDS;' 'Researchers demolish myths about AIDS;' 'Hypothesis that HIV causes AIDS, a sham: Dr. de Harven;' 'AIDS: Virulent myth;' 'It isn't HIV that causes AIDS?'; 'WHO adopts defensive stance over anti-HIV campaigners' contention.'"

The three international participants—Giraldo, de Harven, and Kohnlein—sat for two press conferences, the first attended by 15 mainstream journalists, the second by fifty. The journalists treated the dissident physicians with a great deal of serious interest and respect. Their reports appeared in all the major news outlets, and constituted what major western journalists rarely produce: accurate and insightful stories about AIDS and critics of the HIV model. A month after the Nagpur meeting, newspapers and magazines were still publishing stories about the conference.

The conference was remarkable both for the large number of scientists and physicians who doubt the HIV model, and for the attitudes of those who don't. "Most panelists and audience mem-

bers supported or sympathized with our views," Giraldo says. "Defenses of the HIV-AIDS model arose from the WHO representatives, the director of the Indian National Institute of Virology, and Nagpur health authorities. This led to some hot moments. But a spirit of professionalism brought even the tensest contentions to a friendly close. I don't know of such a free exchange of ideas ever occurring in the United States in which government officials and funded researchers participated."

On February 7, Giraldo lectured at Nerhu University's Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health, in New Delhi, at the invitation of epidemiology professor Ritu Priya, MD, a conference participant. Since 1994 she has published articles critical of India's official AIDS programs, which derive exclusively from the orthodox HIV-AIDS model.

The conference arose from the efforts of nutritionist Shantilal Kothari, president of the Academy of Nutrition Improvement, who last year created the 200-strong HIV-positive People's Club for people diagnosed as "HIV positive" or having AIDS. From his home in Nagpur, Kothari persuaded major newspapers across the country over the years to publish many of his essays questioning the HIV-causes-AIDS model. His regular petitions to Indian officials, suggesting that they reappraise the HIV-AIDS model as well, met with no success. Despite arriving in envelopes stuffed with scientific documents supporting his perspective, no officials indicated they would consider that factors besides HIV might explain AIDS, and that perhaps HIV was not to blame at all.

That changed when he staged a hunger strike to gain attention from officials. On August 10, 1999 a representative of India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare asked him to organize an international conference with experts and scientists from both sides of the HIV/AIDS debate. The ministry made available the venue and promised its own officials would participate and give the alternative AIDS views a fair hearing. According to Giraldo, the officials did attend and seriously considered all perspectives presented at the conference. For a complete report, more information, or the official conference proceedings, contact *RA*.

by Paul Philpott

Inside

US Rep. Lazio, Hillary Clinton's NY Senate rival, seeks \$2.5 million to rethink AIDS

US Rep seeks \$2.5 million for RA group

THANKS TO THE efforts of the New York Health Coalition, a lobbying group, US Congressman Rick Lazio of New York has agreed to sponsor a \$2.5 million proposal for studies into non-HIV causes of and nontoxic treatments for AIDS. Lazio is the assistant to House Majority Leader Dick Armey and agreed to initiate the proposal weeks before replacing Rudolf Guliani as Hillary Rodham Clinton's rival for a US Senate seat. The Coalition's Steve Rogers expects success... if RA supporters methodically back Lazio's efforts, especially if Lazio wins his election.

Appropriations Committee Chairman John Porter (reprinted opposite page).

Urgent appeal from RA Group President Roberto Giraldo, MD

The more letters of support for this project that Rep. Porter receives from his colleagues in the House, the more likely he is to put this into next year's budget. To succeed, Lazio needs US citizens to send letters to their own DC representatives, requesting that they in turn write a letter to Rep. Porter endorsing Lazio's original letter.

The most effective letters would be brief, and stress points like: thousands of scientists and educators support a

reevaluation of the current direction of AIDS research, and the project proposed by Lazio amounts to only one-tenth of 1% of the current AIDS research budget. Rogers recommends including a photocopy of Lazio's letter,

but advises against addressing the topic of AIDS causation or criticizing the HIV-AIDS model directly. That could draw unwelcome attention from opponents of free scientific inquiry who might misconstrue and actively oppose this proposal.

It is important to move quickly as the budget decisions will be made by the end of June. Follow-up calls ten days after sending letters help ensure that the letters are taken seriously.

MAJOR MUSIC CELEBRITIES REAPPRAISE AIDS

Multi-platinum rock band Foo Fighters stage benefit concert for Alive & Well

ONE OF THE principal reasons why the HIV explanation of AIDS achieved and maintains its popular support and public funding is that celebrities embrace and promote it. Scientists who have investigated the evidence and dismissed the HIV model—the "dissident" AIDS scientists—would probably agree that celebrity endorsements have meant more than the data in establishing the HIV model's hegemony. Now the AIDS scientists have their own major celebrity endorsers—the Foo Fighters, a mega-popular platinum-selling alternative rock group.

On January 14 the band staged a Los Angeles benefit concert on behalf of Alive and Well AIDS Alternatives, the dissident AIDS group formerly known as HEAL-LA, and directed by HIV-positive mother Christine Maggiore. "This is the first time that internationally known celebrities have openly endorsed our cause," Maggiore says.

The benefit raised \$20,000, the largest fund raiser ever for an AIDS reappraisal group, and took place in a sold-out Palace Theater in Hollywood, a music club that holds 1,200 people.

Maggiore connected with the Foo Fighters through a friend of band bass player Nate Mendel. Mendel's friend attended a 1998 talk Maggiore gave for HEAL-Seattle, and shared his information with Mendel, including Maggiore's book, *What if Everything You Thought You Knew About AIDS was Wrong?* Mendel was receptive, and made contact with Maggiore, mindful of the linchpin role fellow celebrities had played in successfully promoting what Maggiore was saying was "wrong." Email and phone communications led to

Mendel's full alignment with Maggiore's perspective. He presented his information and conclusions to band mates, who came to agree with him.

They offered to stage the benefit for Alive and Well. As a measure of the Foo Fighter's ascendant celebrity, the event sold out in five minutes. The Foo Fighters are certainly among today's top-drawing rock bands.

The band has placed on its popular website (www.foofighters.com) a prominent link to Alive and Well's website (www.questionaids.com). Text accompanying the link reads, "If you've ever lived or loved in fear of AIDS, click here for a reality check and to find out information the AIDS establishment isn't telling you."

In promoting the event, Mendel had Maggiore join him for an on-air interview on KROQ, LA's number-one radio station and the benefit sponsor. "Nate made an articulate spur-of-the-moment spokesperson and KROQ aired his remarks uncut," Maggiore says. "He said that Alive and Well's message is that HIV is not the cause of AIDS, that we take a healthy approach to AIDS, that AIDS drugs compromise immunity, and other things I never thought I would hear on a major mainstream radio station like KROQ during evening drive-time, let alone uttered by a member of one of my favorite bands. When asked what got him into Alive & Well and questioning AIDS, Nate gave the full title of my book on air for millions of listeners."

Maggiore continues: "Tami, the KROQ air personality who interviewed us, was receptive to our ideas off-mike. She told

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March 30, 2000

The Honorable John Porter
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Porter:

As you begin deliberations on the Fiscal Year 2001 Labor/HHS Appropriations Bill, I respectfully request \$2.5 million for the Group for the Scientific Reappraisal of AIDS (The Group) reevaluation proposal.

The Group is seeking funding to do an independent evaluation of AIDS spending. Many of the scientists within The Group have adduced that federal AIDS research dollars are being misspent on studies and projects that are too narrowly focused and ineffective. Their plan is to demonstrate the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of present AIDS spending. They believe that through their efforts, federal spending can be focused on solutions that have long term effectiveness and they predict that federal AIDS spending can be reduced to \$300 million by 2003.

Specifically, their study will focus on studying the underlying causes of AIDS and the effectiveness of nontoxic and holistic approaches to treatment. The study would include controlled epidemiological studies of all the major risk groups to determine the common causes of their illnesses. The National Academy of Sciences will direct the study with sponsorship assistance from the Alternative Medicine Office of the State University of New York at Stony Brook and the New York Health Coalition.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to work with you to address these concerns. Please feel free to contact me if I can answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Rick Lazio
Representative in Congress

RL:kt

me she felt like one of 'the choir' and asked for more books to share with DJ's who have talk shows involving social and health issues. She gave me contact names to pursue and told me I could mention her name. We met at the concert and was relieved to find that she hadn't changed her mind!"

Band members provided supportive on-camera statements to Maggiore's husband, Robin Scovill, for a documentary he is making of the AIDS reappraisal movement. Founding Foo Fighter Dave Grohl, the band's most popular member, assured Maggiore, "I am behind you guys 100%."

Before the band's performance, Mendel introduced Maggiore and described Alive and Well as "an organization doing important work." Maggiore discussed her experiences as a healthy, pharmaceutical-free HIV-positive mother, and alerted the audience to "an epidemic of unfounded information and unnecessary fear." This perspective was new to nearly all the 1,200 fans. "We worried that Foo

Support S. African pres. Mbeki web petition

Visit www.virusmyth.com to sign the web petition supporting South African President Mbeki's consultation with RA Group scientists in developing his national AIDS policies.

Newest edition of *What if...?* book

To order the highly expanded and revised 4th edition, call toll-free 877-411-2437, or visit www.questionaids.com.

ICMJ website update

Visit the updated International Coalition of Medical Justice website <www.icmj.org>. ICMJ finances legal challenges to forced adherence to HIV- AIDS dogma, especially those involving HIV-positive mothers forced to administer drugs to their children.

Rethinking AIDS

is the monthly publication of the Group for the Scientific Reappraisal of AIDS, also known as the Rethinking AIDS Group.

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The Directors welcome concise and appropriately referenced contributions.

Supporting the Group

You can support our efforts in many ways: scrutinize the HIV/AIDS hypothesis in discussions with friends, classmates, and professors; make photocopies of this journal and distribute them to associates or leave them where free publications are displayed in book and health stores. Currently the Group survives on tax-deductible donations.

Annual subscriptions

\$25 (\$35 US cash foreign) individual, \$50 (\$60 US cash foreign) institutional.

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fans would not be interested in what I had to say and might even be rude," Maggiore recalls. Instead, "the response was really encouraging. That night it was as if challenging the HIV-AIDS model was normal and popular."

During the performance, band members expressed support for Alive and Well, and dedicated a song to the group. Mendel urged everyone to read their brochures and buy their stickers, posters—including one featuring the Foo Fighters logo—and the *What if...?* book. Everything sold well, including all 300 copies of the book, which represented one copy for every four attendees.

Afterwards, band members pledged Maggiore their continued support, and seem to have made good on this promise. The national magazine, Mother Jones, published a website article describing the Foo Fighter's as endangering the lives of their fans by supporting Alive and Well (visit www.motherjones.com or www.questionaids.com). Newspapers and magazines, including the national gay publication, The Advocate, ran the Mother Jones article, or their own articles based on it, and Rolling Stone mentioned it. Mother Jones received so many responses, pro and con, it set up a special page for it on its website. In response, Mendel composed a lengthy and informed letter which the magazine includes as well on its website.

According to Maggiore, band members intend to use their celebrity as deliberately and as assertively to question the HIV model as others have used theirs to promote it.

Mission Statement of the Rethinking AIDS Group

- 1 To develop, articulate, and promote rational scientific discourse on the subject of HIV and AIDS.
- 2 To advocate the absolute right of students, professors, physicians, scientists, government officials, and everyone else to think freely and speak openly on the subject of HIV and AIDS without fear of professional, social, political, economic, or criminal penalties.
- 3 To assemble scientists, physicians, and other informed people who support these views, and make those persons available for commentary and consultation to interested social groups, media outlets, government agencies, professional organizations, and individuals.