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**4th IAS Conference on
HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention
Newsmaker Interview with Pedro Cahn, M.D., Ph.D.
International AIDS Society
And Australasian Society for HIV Medicine
July 22, 2007**

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JILL BRADEN BALDERAS: Dr. Pedro Cahn, president of the International AIDS Society, thanks for joining us today.

Now, when I interviewed IAS Executive Director Craig McClure yesterday about this conference, he called it one of the most exciting years for HIV science, even since 1996 when combination antiretroviral therapy became available. Would you agree with this assessment?

PEDRO CAHN, M.D., PH.D.: Absolutely, because we have very exciting news in the field of antiretroviral therapy. We have new data about two new classes that are going to be approved this year by the regulatory authorities in different country, mainly in the U.S. and Europe, which is usually the starting point for the rest of the world. They are two classes that don't cross resistance with the other existing classes, new compounds in old classes. We also have exciting data in regards to prevention, for instance, in the circumcision trials, showing how the circumcision can work as a new tool added to the already existing tools for prevention. Basic science is very good at this conference and I'm ready to say that the program of the Sydney conference is the best one in the series.

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JILL BRADEN BALDERAS: Now, a few weeks ago, the IAS presented the Sydney Declaration, calling for a stronger commitment to research. Why was this important to do?

PEDRO CAHN, M.D., PH.D.: Well, you know, we are at a point in which we are moving forward with the rollout of antiretroviral therapy. This is a big effort for the international community. We are still far behind our needs, but even so, some people are starting to say, "Well, you know, should we continue fueling money into access to antiretroviral therapy? Shouldn't we better use the money for prevention?" What we need now is to show evidence and to show evidence, we need operational research. For that, we are calling to allocate 10-percent of the money for operational research showing us the results. We know they are very good, but we need to show evidence for that in order to not compromise the future of rollout of antiretroviral therapy. Be reminded that even putting all patients on treatment today, we are not catching up with the rate of new infections, so we need both. We need treatment and we need prevention. We need evidence-based data that can only come from operational research. This is the main reason for releasing the Sydney Declaration that so far has been generated more than 2,000 signatures, including some international organizations.

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JILL BRADEN BALDERAS: How are you trying to get countries involved in this operational research? Clearly, what works in one country might not work in another country. So how do you get countries working together and involved in this?

PEDRO CAHN, M.D., PH.D.: Well, I think that one of the ways is showing local experiences, trying to share these experiences and networking. IAS has a role in this regard as a broker, as a facilitator of the dialogue between countries, international organizations, researchers, community groups, et cetera. So you are right. One size does not fit all. But there are some common issues in developing countries and one country can learn from the other and then fine-tune it locally as needed.

JILL BRADEN BALDERAS: You've talked in the past about the need for unprecedented collaboration here at this conference. Why can collaboration between stakeholders be difficult sometimes and how can it be improved at this conference?

PEDRO CAHN, M.D., PH.D.: Well, first because we are human beings and everybody has his own agenda. Second, because the different stakeholders in the AIDS arena represent different constituencies and they have some priorities that are not always the same or run in the same order. So, for instance, we have tension between the patent rights from the

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drug discoverers and the right of the people of access to antiretroviral therapy that may save lives. How do you reconcile the rights of patent holders to have some revenues that help them to continue investing in innovation with, on the other side, not harming the right of the people to get the drugs? This is an effort in which we are continuously working and trying to broker, trying to get some results put together in meetings in which the different components of this scenario can really talk to each other and find solutions. Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is more difficult, but we keep trying.

JILL BRADEN BALDERAS: What are some examples of what you hope to actually come out of this conference with, in addition to the drugs? What other types of examples of collaboration between the different stakeholders can happen here in Sydney?

PEDRO CAHN, M.D., PH.D.: We just released a press release about a situation that was happening in the field between one pharmaceutical company and one activist group, in which IAS was fostering the dialogue. We were very successful because there was a lawsuit in the middle and now it has been removed. Everybody keeps their own agenda. We don't want anybody to resign or feel undermined because we are facilitating an agreement, but we are removing obstacles from the highway. We try really to help people not forget that we

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are talking about human beings. We are talking about saving lives. We are talking about preventing infections. All other issues are second to that. Our first priority is the person living with HIV or the person is at risk of acquiring HIV.

JILL BRADEN BALDERAS: When you took office as president of IAS, you asked that the needs of your region, Latin America – you're from Argentina – not be excluded from the agenda. Do you sometimes feel like the epidemic in Latin America is forgotten?

PEDRO CAHN, M.D., PH.D.: Well, what happens is that the epidemic is so dramatic, so catastrophic, in Africa – the situation is so bad in some regions, like India and now in Eastern Europe – that sometimes Latin America is like the Cinderella. It is a little bit forgotten. You're right. In some parts of Latin America, the situation is catastrophic. Haiti is like an African country with about 8- to 9-percent prevalence. We have a very bad situation with regards to, for instance, perinatal transmission in countries like Honduras or other countries in Central America. The English Caribbean is really very heavily hit by the epidemic.

On the other side, we have in Latin America very good examples of political will. Programs like the Brazilian one, the Argentinian one, Uruguay, Chile, Costa Rica, Couga [misspelled?], Venezuela, et cetera, they are showing that if

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there is political will, antiretroviral therapy can be rolled out to patients. So we have both sides of the coin in this heterogenous panorama.

Sometimes people just think about Latin America in paying attention to the Brazilian program, which is the most important program in the world. They are covering more than 200,000 people. But this is part of the reality. We need to draw attention to the other part of reality, the dark side of the panorama.

JILL BRADEN BALDERAS: Well, next year you will have the opportunity to draw attention to Latin America because AIDS 2008 will be in Mexico City.

PEDRO CAHN, M.D., PH.D.: That's right.

JILL BRADEN BALDERAS: Last year, in an interview with Kaiser Network, you said that there would be an attempt to visit every Latin American country leading up to AIDS 2008 to find out how they're trying to improve the HIV/AIDS situation in their country. How is that going and what have you found?

PEDRO CAHN, M.D., PH.D.: Well, we are on our way. We are doing this together with [inaudible], which is the local co-chair for the Mexico conference. He is also a member of our governing council at the International AIDS Society. So far, what I can tell you is there is a nice level of expectancy in regards to the Mexico conference. This is the first time that

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a conference will take place in Latin America. This is a unique opportunity for us to show what is going on in the region – the good side and the dark side. I think that we will have a conference that will reflect and in some way show to the world what the region has to contribute to the fight against the epidemic and what the region expects from the world. So far, we have visited at least 10 countries and I can tell you that it's reasonable to think we'll have a great conference there.

JILL BRADEN BALDERAS: Dr. Pedro Cahn, president of the International AIDS Society, thanks for joining us today.

PEDRO CAHN, M.D., PH.D.: My pleasure. Thank you for the very important and very professional job you are doing helping our conference to be under way.

JILL BRADEN BALDERAS: We're glad to do it.

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