

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**International AIDS Society and the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse
Award New Fellowships for Outstanding Research in Drug Use and HIV at AIDS 2012**

13 July 2012 (Geneva, Switzerland) – The International AIDS Society (IAS) and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) today announced the recipients of their fourth annual joint research fellowships. Five young researchers from Bangladesh, Greece, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Tajikistan will receive US\$75,000 each to pursue groundbreaking research to advance the scientific understanding of the linkage between drug use and HIV, while fostering multinational research.

The IAS/NIDA research fellowships are awarded to junior scientists for 18 months for post-doctoral training and to well-established HIV researchers for eight-months of professional development, both at institutes excelling in research on substance and drug use and HIV and under the guidance of a mentor.

Presentation of the IAS/NIDA fellowships will take place on Monday, 23 July 2012 at the XIX International AIDS Conference (AIDS 20102) at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C., at the beginning of the morning plenary session at 8:35.

“With the awarding of these fellowships, we continue to expand the reach of this programme into four new countries, touching regions and communities deeply impacted by the intersection of drug use and HIV,” said IAS President Dr. Elly Katabira. “Fostering up and coming researchers in this field and promoting innovative research are central to the IAS’s larger efforts to improve conditions and outcomes for people who use drugs.”

Drug use is a global problem that brings with it greatly increased risk for HIV infection. A total of 120 countries have reported cases of HIV among people who inject drugs. Drug-related HIV/AIDS epidemics have followed the spread of injecting heroin and other opiates in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. Overall growth in numbers of new HIV infections has slowed in most regions of the world. One exception to this trend, however, is the continued growth in numbers of HIV infections linked to injecting drug use, especially in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where HIV prevalence among people who inject drugs is higher than 40% in some countries.

Use of other substances, such as alcohol, cocaine and methamphetamine is also associated with increased HIV risk behaviours. Considering the high prevalence of HIV in people using drugs and other substances, there is an urgent need to study the impact of these substances on the progression of HIV and co-infections, as well as the interactions with antiretroviral treatment.

“The intersection of drug use and HIV is crucial to tracking, responding to and slowing the global HIV epidemic and we remain steadfast in our commitment to advancing innovative research,” said NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. “This ongoing partnership between NIDA and the IAS has proven to be a very effective mechanism for supporting outstanding research efforts that will bring us closer to effective and humane responses to these closely linked epidemics.”

The 2012 IAS/NIDA Joint Research Fellowships are awarded to:

- **Makhsatsho Bakhromov**, Tajikistan, PRISMA Research Center, Dushanbe; project: ***Temporary labor migration, substance abuse and HIV risk among Tajik male migrants in Moscow***; mentor: Judith Levy, University of Illinois at Chicago.

- **MD. Salequul Islam**, Bangladesh, Jahangirnagar University, Savar; project: ***Mechanisms and implications of injection and inflammation among HIV/HCV-coinfected drug users in the ALIVE Study***; mentor: Gregory D. Kirk, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.
- **Georgios Nikolopoulo**, Greece, Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Athens; project: ***Developing measures to study how macro-level economic and social changes may have affected HIV risk in the population of injecting drug users***; mentor: Samuel Friedman, Institute for AIDS Research, National Development and Research Institutes, Inc., New York, NY.
- **Mehrak Javadi Paydar**, Islamic Republic of Iran, Tehran University of Medical Sciences; project: ***Neuroprotective effects of estrogen/soy isoflavones against development of HIV-induced neurodegeneration in awake, freely moving rats through modulations in dopamine transmission system***; mentor: Rosemarie Booze, University of South Carolina.
- **Seyed Ramin Radfar**, Islamic Republic of Iran, Thought, Culture and Health (ROOZBEH) Institute, Esfahan; project: ***Prevalence of ATS use among those who are under MMT/BMT and its effects on HIV risk-related behaviors in Isfahan, Iran***; mentor: Richard Rawson, University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Psychiatry.

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About the IAS:

The International AIDS Society (IAS) is the world's leading independent association of HIV professionals, with over 16,000 members from more than 196 countries working at all levels of the global response to AIDS. Our members include researchers from all disciplines, clinicians, public health and community practitioners on the frontlines of the epidemic, as well as policy and programme planners. The IAS is the custodian of the biennial International AIDS Conference, which will be held in Washington, D.C., in July 2012, and lead organizer of the IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention. www.iasociety.org | www.aids2012.org

About NIDA:

The National Institute on Drug Abuse is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to inform policy and improve practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and information on NIDA research and other activities can be found on the NIDA home page at www.drugabuse.gov.

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