

**Health Journalism Seminar
Buenos Aires, Argentina
October 12-14, 2004**

CONCLUSIONS



Journalists' Working Groups

**Journalists' Recommendations on Covering HIV/AIDS
"Health Journalism Seminar"
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Summary

More than two dozen Latin American health journalists reached conclusions and developed a series of recommendations for improving and highlighting coverage of HIV/AIDS, a disease that affects an estimated two million people in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2003.

The recommendations came out of a three-day workshop, October 11-13, 2004, sponsored by the International Broadcasting Bureau, (IBB - which includes the Voice of America (VOA) and Merck & Co., Inc., (which operates as Merck Sharp & Dohme in Latin America). The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) provided technical support.

A key outcome of the conference was the creation of an informal regional network of health journalists who can exchange views and stories ideas and information on HIV/AIDS by email and telephone through their participation in the virtual network "Red Salud" (health network), which brings together over 400 journalists, news sources, health communicators, and health information specialists from all over the region of the Americas (www.comminit.com/la/redsaldud).



Journalists' Working Group Session Pics

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Conclusions

1. Journalists should increasingly turn attention to the social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS, examining the disease's effect on the labor market, the economy and society.
2. Prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS should be covered as extensively as the illness itself.
3. Journalists need to examine HIV/AIDS in the context of a country's society, politics and culture.
4. Media and the scientific community need to work together more frequently, improving the dialogue, exchanging ideas about HIV/AIDS and simplifying medical terminology to make it more accessible to lay people.
5. Reports on HIV/AIDS need to be more in-depth and less sensational, examining, among other things: treatment costs, governments' role in fighting HIV/AIDS; stigma associated with HIV/AIDS; the role of families and communities in treating the disease.



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Recommendations for Improving Coverage and Placement of Stories on HIV/AIDS

Preparing Better Stories

1. Use language that is clear, direct and easily understood by large audiences
2. Avoid language that stigmatizes or discriminates against people living with HIV/AIDS



3. Double-check sources and use two sources to verify information
4. Focus on human interest stories when possible
5. Be mindful of privacy and confidentiality requests
6. Discuss the sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS clearly and frankly
7. Cover all aspects of prevention including abstinence, condoms and cultural mores

Improving Placement and Presentation

1. Work to educate editors, news directors and photo editors about the societal and economic importance of HIV/AIDS
2. Strive to overcome “AIDS fatigue” by developing new kinds of stories that emphasize, where possible, successes in prevention and treatment. Look to destigmatize the disease by focusing on positive role models
3. Use all venues for stories: columns, shows, feature stories, entertainment and sports pages
4. Attract celebrities and other popular figures to deliver messages about HIV/AIDS
5. Use “infographics” to highlight the story: graphs, pie charts and other visuals
6. Use appropriate photographs to illustrate stories
7. Find new angles on HIV/AIDS stories, from HIV/AIDS as a development issue to the individual experience with HIV/AIDS.



Representatives of Organizing Institutions

From Left to Right: Raul Gatica (Merck Sharp & Dohme, Argentina) , Margalit Edelman (Merck & Co.), Dr. David Greeley (Merck & Co.), Joan Mower (International Broadcasting Bureau), Dr. Rafael Obregon (Pan American Health Organization), and Gustavo Win (International Broadcasting Bureau)