

# Optimising ART

## June 2018



---

This is a monthly update shared with all members involved in projects aimed at optimising ART, and is meant to provide a short update of major achievements, challenges, and plans for the future. Please submit any inputs to Celia Serenata before the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every month.

---

*In the last newsletter we reported that we were very busy preparing for the introduction of TLD into the national programme. However, the safety signal from the Botswana pregnancy cohort of DTG being associated neural tube defects (NTD) in infants for women exposed to DTG during conception caused some delay in finalising the tender and guideline recommendations. Wits RHI and some of its ART optimisation partners participated in multiple calls, email discussion forums and the like over the last few weeks. A meeting will be held with the Department of Health mid-June to discuss the way forward. (Several statements on the DTG safety signal have been issued by WHO, Unitaid, PEPFAR, EMA, HHS/NIH and SAHPRA. These can be found online).*

*The USAID-funded OPTIMIZE consortium had a 2-day productive Technical Steering Committee to discuss priorities for Year 3 and Year 4 of activity. A report on the meeting, focusing on action items, will be finalised by mid-June.*

*Finally, Wits RHI has been experiencing issues with the email server since Friday 8 June. If you have sent an email and not received a response, we may not have received it. Please try sending again.*

## Achievements from May 2018

### ADVANCE, Wits RHI

- The DSMB was pleased with the safety and conduct of ADVANCE and recommended continuation according to protocol, with emphasis on retention of enrolled participants to ensure that endpoint data on all participants will be collected.
- Enrolment closed in May 2018 as per DSMB approval, with the last participant enrolled on 17 May 2018.
- A total of 1053 participants have been enrolled (14 are adolescents and 1039 adults).
- As a result of the DTG safety signal from the Botswana pregnancy cohort, the informed consent forms were revised to: (i) inform participants of the risk of neural tube defects; (ii) include options for pregnant participants to terminate participation in the study and

## Upcoming Events

4-5 June: OPTIMIZE Technical Steering Committee, Johannesburg

6-8 June: ADVANCE Investigators Meeting, Johannesburg

12 June: Meeting on TLD introduction

---

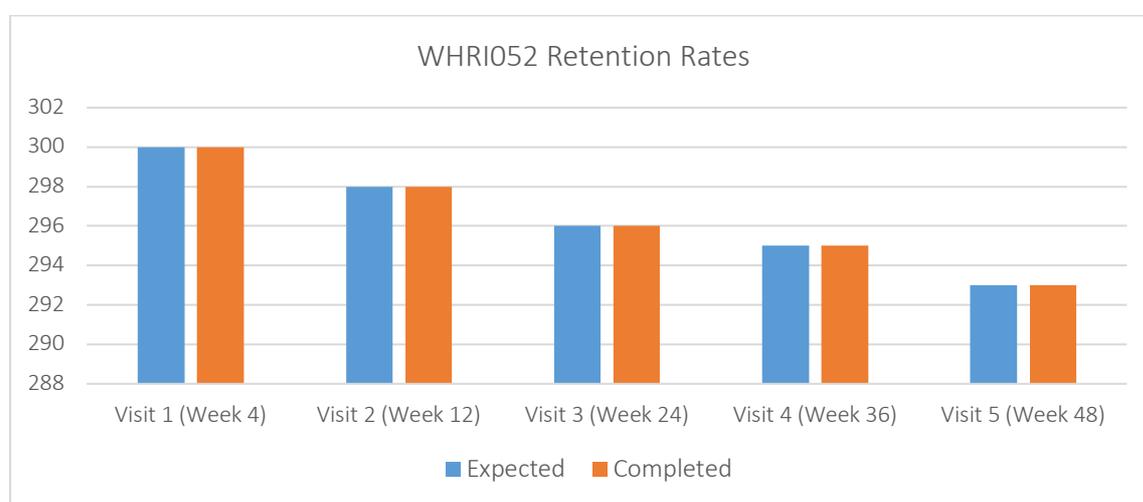
Queries can be directed to:

Celia Serenata, Wits RHI,  
[cserenata@wrhi.ac.za](mailto:cserenata@wrhi.ac.za)

switch to TEE with 96 week follow up period through the state; (iii) re-emphasise the importance of contraception and informing study team of altered pregnancy intentions; and (iv) if participants change their intention to fall pregnant whilst on study they will be removed from the study; and if they do fall pregnant and are <14 weeks, they will be switched to EFV for the duration of the pregnancy. The revised informed consent forms were submitted for regulatory approval on 30 May 2018; regulatory approval is pending.

### LOW-DOSE DARUNAVIR (WRHI052), Wits RHI

- The last participant last visit was conducted on 16 May 2018.
- Retention rates have successfully been maintained at 100%, with a total of 1482 expected visits completed.
- Post-trial monitoring has been revised to conduct annual safety assessments in alignment with local standard of care guidelines.



### NANOTECHNOLOGY, University of Liverpool

- SSAT is continuing the EFV 2<sup>nd</sup> stage trial; due to be completed in July 2018.
- UoL held a kick-off meeting with Juniper, and manufacturing of DRV/r for feasibility and stability testing is underway.
- The spray dried formulation dose finding study has been completed.

### HEALTH WORKER ENGAGEMENT, SAHCS

- Two members of SAHCS attended the INTEREST meeting in Kigali.
- The current ART optimisation CME trainings are on hold while the training materials are being updated to reflect more on the neural tube defects risk for women conceiving while on DTG.
- SAHCS is planning for the remaining VL and treatment optimisation training for nurses. These have been very successful, with high attendance from each province where these have been held to date.
- SAHCS will attend the IAS conference in July in Amsterdam, and specifically also attend community sessions.

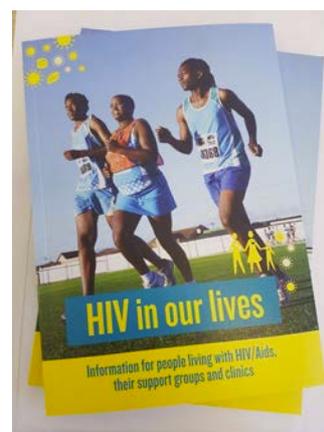
## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, TAC

### Training

- All provinces have now completed the training of trainers.
- Branch training has been taking place in the provinces as usual – and 942 people were trained in April.

### Publications

- 500 copies of *HIV in our Lives* have been printed, and been delivered to the TAC offices for use by the TAC trainers, provincial office bearers, branch office bearers, and branch members.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, HIV i-Base

- Community resource to support TLD transition and the ADVANCE study is now online: <http://i-base.info/modern-art-for-africa>. i-Base is updating the information on DTG at conception to reflect recent findings. Some printed copies will be distributed at IAS.
- HIV i-Base organised two community days, with participants from AfroCAB and TAC, prior to the INTEREST meeting in May in Kigali, Rwanda. Day 1 focussed on a update on Unitaids' programmes, and community engagement. Day 2 focused on country updates, as well as training on DTG neural tube defects (by HIV i-Base), and train-the-trainers methodology (by TAC). This included discussion on communicating new findings to communities.

## Plans for June 2018

### ADVANCE, Wits RHI

- An Investigator Meeting is scheduled for 06 – 08 June 2018 to conduct training and discuss implementation of protocol amendment #3.
- Following successful deliberations, protocol amendment #3 will be implemented as of 18 June 2018.
- Reconsent all women of childbearing potential on a DTG-containing regimen to inform them of the importance of contraception, and also of the risk of neural tube defects.

### LOW-DOSE DARUNAVIR (WRHI052), Wits RHI

- Ongoing data cleaning and query resolution of unresolved data queries.
- Discussion with external monitor around timelines to perform study close-out visit.
- Awaiting news of the abstract submission to IAS. If not successful, the plan is to submit to the European HIV Conference in Glasgow in October 2018.

## NANOTECHNOLOGY, University of Liverpool

- Analysis of spray dried dose finding study to be completed.
- Spray dried formulation taken through further *in vivo* studies.
- Continued mass spectrometry development.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, TAC

- No major activities planned.
- Continuation of provincial branch trainings scheduled.

## Staffing Changes

- TAC: Lester Baloyi has been hired as the Gauteng Provincial Trainer, replacing Portia Serote who resigned in March.

## Outputs

Articles; manuscripts submitted for review; abstracts submitted; presentations given. (Also provide electronic version of such products for the Dropbox – see

<https://www.dropbox.com/home/OPTIMIZE%20TechnicalSteeringCommittee/Calendar+Events>)

Also, to assist with all communication, branding and marketing opportunities, please find relevant guidance and documents in the Dropbox at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/home/OPTIMIZE%20TechnicalSteeringCommittee/Communications+Branding+Marketing>

Papers published

- None.

Talks Given

- None.

Presentations

- None.

Resources

- HIV i-Base resources on Modern ART in Africa, and one specifically on South Africa. <http://i-base.info/modern-art-for-africa/>

## Media Coverage

- 25 May 2018: 15 Years of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) - 15 ways USAID is working toward epidemic control - Optimizing Simpler, Safer, More Affordable HIV/AIDS Treatment. [15 Years of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief \(PEPFAR\)](#)
- 28 May 2018. Health-e News. Fears of birth defects prompt warnings about new HIV wonder drug. <https://www.health-e.org.za/2018/05/28/fears-of-birth-defects-prompt-warnings-about-new-hiv-wonder-drug/>
- 31 May 2018. Business Day. Birth defects scare shifts roll-out of HIV drug. <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/health/2018-05-31-birth-defects-scare-hits-roll-out-of-hiv-drug/>
- 30 May 2018. Medical Brief. WHO, EMA and FDA warn on 'wonder' drug and birth defects. <https://www.medicalbrief.co.za/archives/ema-fda-warn-wonder-drug-birth-defects/>
- 04 June 2018: The Lancet – Global Health. Comparative safety of dolutegravir-based or efavirenz-based antiretroviral treatment started during pregnancy in Botswana: an observational study
- 05 June 2018: Lancet HIV 2018. Dolutegravir for first-line antiretroviral therapy in low-income and middle-income countries: uncertainties and opportunities for implementation and research. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(18\)30218-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(18)30218-3/fulltext)

## Other

- 08 June 2018: Deal slashes drug price of 3 in 1 pill for people living with HIV [https://www.devex.com/news/deal-slashes-drug-price-of-3-in-1-pill-for-people-living-with-hiv-92910?access\\_key=&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newswire&mkt\\_tok=eyJpIjoiWmprek5XVmpaamhoT1RreClInQiOiJqcnpGZWWh2N1Y0R25vdmx2d3prZEFpZlZaVHczbVdvVzBucmFUV2FXWWlvNHBacFk0MzI0ZDROYU9SK2F3T1lzRUk5VE5xWkJKWjZvWEhjZGFLYXNlU3AwN111bXV4N3lpY3YzXC9CdmVCWkNqc2tZY3M0djVGNEFidUVtSEFxdDcifQ%3D%3D](https://www.devex.com/news/deal-slashes-drug-price-of-3-in-1-pill-for-people-living-with-hiv-92910?access_key=&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newswire&mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiWmprek5XVmpaamhoT1RreClInQiOiJqcnpGZWWh2N1Y0R25vdmx2d3prZEFpZlZaVHczbVdvVzBucmFUV2FXWWlvNHBacFk0MzI0ZDROYU9SK2F3T1lzRUk5VE5xWkJKWjZvWEhjZGFLYXNlU3AwN111bXV4N3lpY3YzXC9CdmVCWkNqc2tZY3M0djVGNEFidUVtSEFxdDcifQ%3D%3D)

\*\*\*\*\*

## Useful Websites

- USAID page on ART optimisation: <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/global-health/hiv-and-aids/technical-areas/antiretroviral-therapy-optimization>
- Unitaid page on ART optimisation: <https://www.unitaid.eu/project/safer-robust-less-expensive-first-line-antiretroviral-therapy-advance-trial/> (for the grant with Wits RHI, see associated grants below that)
- ICAP website for its OPTIMIZE activities: <https://optimize.icap.columbia.edu/>

\*\*\*\*\*

## Future Conferences/Trainings

- 24-27 October 2018: 4<sup>th</sup> Southern African HIV Clinicians Society Conference, Gallagher Convention Centre, Midrand. [www.sahivsoc2018.co.za](http://www.sahivsoc2018.co.za)

## Acknowledgements

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is a proud supporter of OPTIMIZE. OPTIMIZE is led by the Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute (Wits RHI) and founding members include ICAP at Columbia University, Mylan Laboratories, the University of Liverpool, and the UNITAID-funded Medicines Patent Pool. As an expanding partnership aimed at harnessing multiple stakeholders' collective efforts, OPTIMIZE also includes the University of Cape Town (UCT) and contributions from private sector partners. USAID is a key implementing agency of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and is responsible for over half of all PEPFAR programs with activities focused in 35 priority countries and regions, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. For more information, please visit: [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

Unitaid finds new and better ways to prevent, test and treat HIV, tuberculosis and malaria quickly and more affordably. It takes game-changing ideas and turns those into practical solutions that can help accelerate the end of the three diseases. Established in 2006 by Brazil, Chile, France, Norway and the United Kingdom, Unitaid plays an important part in the global effort to defeat HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. For more information, please visit: [www.unitaid.org](http://www.unitaid.org)

