Virtual COVID-19 Conference Will Wrap Up AIDS 2020

The one-day meeting will feature leaders in the national and global pandemic response.

April 30, 2020 By Liz Highleyman

This year's International AIDS Conference, better known as AIDS 2020, will include a daylong meeting on COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. The virtual conference will take place July 6 through 10, with the COVID sessions slated for the last day.

The conference will be the first international gathering on COVID-19 for all the many stakeholders, including affected communities, in the emerging response, according to the International AIDS Society (IAS), which sponsors the global AIDS conference every two years.

"We as cochairs and IAS recognized that the AIDS 2020 meeting was being held at the same time as a global pandemic was raging," conference cochair Monica Gandhi, MD, MPH, of the University of California at San Francisco told POZ. "Since we are the largest global health conference in the world, we wanted to immediately have a simultaneously held conference focused on COVID-19 using the same platform."

As previously reported, San Francisco and Oakland were selected as the joint hosts for AIDS 2020, but the conference was switched to a virtual format because of the COVID-19 crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic represents an "unprecedented global emergency" and—just four months after it emerged in China late last year—it is already "the most lethal new pandemic since the emergence of AIDS nearly 40 years ago," IAS president and AIDS 2020 international chair Anton Pozniak, MD, said in a statement.

Many of the global HIV experts who will attend AIDS 2020 are also at the forefront of COVID-19 virology, immunology, clinical care, and treatment and vaccine research.

The COVID-19 Conference will feature Anthony Fauci, MD, and Ambassador Deborah Birx, MD, who have a long history of leadership in the national and global HIV/AIDS response and are now members of the White House COVID-19 Task Force, as well as longtime HIV researcher Salim Abdool Karim, MD, PhD, chair of the South African Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Advisory Committee.

“The HIV response has taught the world a great deal about how to react to a pandemic of enormous scale and high lethality,” Pozniak, Gandhi and other conference organizers wrote in a commentary published in The Lancet. “The IAS Virtual COVID-19 Conference at AIDS 2020: Virtual will bring together the human family to take on this pandemic. Together we can build resilience in the face of COVID-19.”

COVID-19 abstracts will be accepted through May 25. Reflecting the usual AIDS conference themes, the COVID-19 meeting will include five tracks:

- Track A: Basic science, pathogenesis, virology, immunology and inflammation
- Track B: Clinical science, testing and diagnosis, natural history, clinical care and treatments
- Track C: Epidemiology, transmission dynamics, prevention and vaccines
- Track D: Public health responses and community level efforts, programs, policies and modeling
- Track E: Social, economic, political and human rights impacts of the pandemic and the response.

Registration for the COVID-19 Conference is now open. People already registered for AIDS 2020: Virtual will be automatically registered for the COVID-19 Conference. The COVID-19 sessions will be publicly available and free of charge.

For more information about the COVID-19 Conference, visit covid19.aids2020.org.

For more information about AIDS 2020: Virtual, visit aids2020.org.

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