

Immunopaedia goes to the 21st International AIDS Conference



The 21st International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2016) came to a close this past Friday with over 18 000 delegates attending from around the world. The conference included panel discussions, poster presentations, exhibitions, and film screenings all based on the theme of the conference, “Access Equity Rights Now”.



The conference returned to Durban, South Africa after 16 years since the conference was held in 2000. During this time, South Africa was in the midst of HIV/AIDS denial. The-then president of South Africa even questioned if HIV caused AIDS. Since then, South Africa has made serious efforts towards ending HIV/AIDS amongst its population. South Africa now has the largest antiretroviral treatment program globally and large domestic investments towards ending the HIV endemic. However the fight is not over. South Africa still has one of the highest rates of HIV with nearly 20% of the adult population infected.

The conference was attended by special guests including UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon, Bill Gates, Prince Harry, Sir Elton John, Charlize Theron, and Nobel Prize winner, Françoise Barré-Sinoussi. Although the conference was led by experts in

the field of HIV research and advocacy, the discussion was more focused on the issues of the endemic, rather than proposing realistic solutions for HIV endemic countries like South Africa to take. However, providing solutions to end one of the most infectious diseases is easier said than done.

The conference did provide a wide array of presentations that took a multidisciplinary approach to tackling the endemic. The conference also should be applauded for their heavy focus of the most vulnerable (and neglected) populations affected by HIV/AIDS. The conference provided a platform for representatives of these communities to express their unique issues and needs to end the endemic. This was arguably one of the greatest contributions to the conference.

With informative presentations and interactive activities, the 21st International AIDS Conference fostered an exciting environment for researchers, advocates, reporters, and everyone in-between to learn and engage in the fight to end AIDS!

Article review by Braden Kenny, an intern from the University of Toronto