

INTERREG HIV Project in Martinique

The establishment of an inter-Caribbean HIV observatory in the French Overseas Departments of the Americas was the objective of a Caribbean-wide project of cooperation launched by the University Hospital of Fort-de-France in Martinique.

Ms. Marlène Ouka was the President of the Technical Committee for Monitoring and Implementation of the INTERREG HIV project in Martinique.

The University Hospital of Pointe-a-Pitre in Guadeloupe was the project lead in collaboration with the hospitals of Martinique, French Guiana and St. Martin. The Martinican component of the project was launched in the presence of representatives from the hospitals of Martinique and Guadeloupe, the Regional Councils of Martinique, and Guadeloupe, the Regional Health Agency and partner associations.

The aim of the INTERREG HIV project was to reduce the impact of HIV infection in the French Overseas Departments and by extension the wider Caribbean region. The project had three main axes: infrastructural investments, behavioural surveys and community outreach.

The University Hospital of Fort-de-France is conducting two projects according to Marlène Ouka, President of the Technical Committee for Monitoring and Implementation, 'two projects are being implemented by the University Hospital of Fort-de-France. Firstly, the installation of a capillary sequencing platform at the Virology and Immunology laboratory which will improve therapeutic support to HIV patients in the French Overseas Departments and the wider Caribbean. It will also strengthen our monitoring of HIV resistance to antiretroviral drugs. Furthermore, we are setting up and training multidisciplinary teams of health professionals in Dominica to improve healthcare delivery to HIV infected patients'.

Two associations actively involved in HIV/ AIDS prevention are also involved in the inter-Caribbean project: AIDES and Action SIDA Martinique. The former is leading a series of surveys which aim to better understand the behaviour of vulnerable populations namely, migrants, men who have sex with men, commercial sex workers and crack users with a view to improving prevention outreach. The latter has a partnership with St. Lucia to provide daily homecare support to persons living with HIV.

According to Marie-Rose Lafleur, Operations Manager of the INTERREG Caraïbes Programme, representing the joint Technical Secretariat (STC), 'INTERREG HIV is an exemplary project. It is ambitious and important in terms of the financial resources mobilised to support a major public health issue, which will have a positive impact on each of us'.

The INTERREG HIV project represented a budget of 4.9 million euros of which 75% (or 3.4 million euros) was financed by the European INTERREG IV Caribbean programme 2007 -2013.

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