TB/HIV Care's programmes well-represented as Durban becomes hub of conference activity

Durban was the centre of the HIV and TB world's attention this week as the International AIDS Society hosted both the TB Conference 2016 (incorporating the biennial South African TB Conference), and the 21st International AIDS Conference 2016 in the city.

TB/HIV Care was engaged in a variety of activities to raise the importance of addressing TB as well as HIV, to highlight the importance of health services directed at key populations and to advocate for increased investment in community-based health services.

On Sunday 17 July, TB/HIV Care provided health services to visitors and the congregation at an event at eThekwini Community Church where the South African Minister of Health, Dr Motsoaledi, addressed the congregation on the challenges associated with TB. The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal and the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Health as well as other high-profile guests were also present.

A high-level delegation from UNAIDS visited TB/HIV Care's HIV prevention in sex workers site in Durban, where pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) are being delivered as one of South Africa's pilot sites.

For the duration of the AIDS Conference 2016, from the 18th-21st July, TB/HIV Care hosted a TB HIV Networking Zone in collaboration with AERAS and ACTION to ensure that TB was highlighted at the AIDS 2016 Conference. Sessions at the networking zone explored the way in which TB and HIV affect different populations differently, how to adopt a human rights-based approach when dealing with TB and HIV, and the importance of community-based and patient-centred health services.

Much of TB/HIV Care's work with key populations was represented at AIDS 2016 through posters and presentations. These included a poster on working with communities, law enforcement agencies and political leaders to enhance HIV prevention programmes for people who inject
drugs, and a roundtable discussion on fostering enabling environments for key populations for key populations with law enforcement agencies. In addition, Shaun Shelley, Advocacy and Psychosocial Co-ordinator for the Step Up Project, presented at a satellite event on harm reduction with an emphasis on programmes, policy and policing.

Finding and reaching key populations was another sub-theme for TB/HIV Care, as Andrew Lambert presented a model of how to reach female sex workers with mobile health and HIV prevention services, while Andrew Scheibe, a Technical Advisor for TB/HIV Care, presented a poster on 'using programmatic mapping to identify locations where people who inject drugs congregate and to estimate their population sizes in three South African cities'.

In the Global Village, Prof Harry Hausler, TB/HIV Care CEO, presented on improving HIV and TB services in South African correctional centres and Shaun presented a talk on harm reduction funding in South Africa, and spoke about a report on human rights violations experienced by people who inject drugs. As part of a satellite session on Hepatitis C (HCV) and HIV, Andrew Scheibe presented ideas on 'assessing HCV and HIV co-infection among key populations in South Africa'.

Finally, TB/HIV Care submitted 22 quilts to the international HIV Quilt Project, which is co-ordinated by the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC). These quilts were made by people involved in TB/HIV Care’s programmes, including people who inject drugs, sex workers and prison inmates, as well as those dedicated to supporting them.

The quilts are part of a larger display of quilts made by people affected by HIV, which tell the story of what has been achieved since the last time the International AIDS Conference was held in South Africa in 2000. Among the successes since then is the establishment of the world's largest antiretroviral treatment programme.

It was a busy week for Durban, and for TB/HIV Care, as researchers, policy-makers, donors and programme-implementers meet to better define problems and identify solutions.