

A New Executive Director for the IAS

Welcome Robin Gorna

The International AIDS Society (IAS) welcomes Ms. Robin Gorna as Executive Director of the Society. Ms Gorna succeeds outgoing Executive Director, Craig McClure.

In her role as executive director, Robin will head the IAS secretariat based in Geneva, Switzerland. Responsible for the day-to-day management of the activities of the organization, she is charged with implementing the organization's strategic and operational plans under the direction of the IAS' governance and membership.

Robin's involvement with the IAS began in 1998, when she was the community co-chair of the 12th World AIDS Conference, a biennial event organized principally by the IAS.

Robin joins the IAS's Geneva headquarters from South Africa where she was the Senior Regional Health and AIDS Adviser for the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID). Before this, Robin headed up a new Global Policy Team on AIDS at DFID where she led many policy processes, including delivering the first UK government strategy on AIDS in developing countries and securing international agreement to "Universal Access", first at the G8 in Gleneagles and then through the United Nations.

With over 20 years' experience in the response to HIV, Robin's previous roles include executive director of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations; co-chair of the 6th International Conference on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific; and director of health promotion for the Terrence Higgins Trust; among others. Ms Gorna is the author of many internationally-published works, including a book entitled *Vamps, Virgins and Victims: How can women fight AIDS?* (Cassells, 1996).

"We are delighted to find a candidate of Robin's caliber and expertise for this position," said IAS president Julio Montaner. "Robin has worked in all corners of the globe across many diverse issues within HIV and healthcare generally. She is a strong and respected leader, and I have no doubt she will make a significant contribution to the IAS and to AIDS."

Farewell Craig McClure

In the six years since Craig McClure first took the helm of the IAS, the changes at the organization have been nothing short of transformational.

McClure assumed the role of Executive Director in 2004. That same year, the IAS moved its office from Stockholm to Geneva in order to facilitate closer working

relationships with other international partners. The IAS also began a process of bringing administration of the International AIDS Conference (IAC) in-house to ensure greater institutional memory and take advantage of the many benefits and efficiencies of having a permanent and professional conference secretariat working on both the IAC and the IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention.

The IAS has also grown stronger during McClure's tenure. Between 2004 and 2009 IAS membership more than doubled, from 5,800 to over 13,000. There has also been a noticeable increase in regional diversity. For example, in 2004 nearly six in ten (58%) IAS members were from the US, Canada and Europe, but by 2009 that trend had reversed: 56% of current members are from Africa, Latin America and Asia.

McClure also led the organization to greater involvement in regional conferences and improved partnerships with regional AIDS societies; the re-launch of the online Journal of the IAS; the introduction of a quarterly newsletter; and the expansion of professional development programmes for members.

Under McClure, the IAS itself has taken on a much bolder advocacy role. Through its new policy department the IAS prioritized: the elimination of stigma and discriminatory policies, such as HIV-related travel restrictions; access to substitution therapy and to other scientifically proven prevention strategies; universal access to and comparable normative guidelines for the use of HIV treatment in low- and higher-income countries; the strengthening of health care systems; and most recently, support of the preventative benefit of antiretroviral treatment.

In the history of the HIV epidemic, there are certainly many examples of boldness. However, finding a leader who is both thoughtful and bold, who is willing to take strategic risks and one who embraces change and is comfortable with complexities is far less common. The IAS has been fortunate to have had such a leader at its helm for the past six years.