



## Media Release

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00 :01 EDT THURSDAY MARCH 26**

### **Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases Annual Conference 2009 – Day 2**

#### **First ever study shows that face masks can be effective in preventing flus and colds.**

**Hunter Valley, NSW, Thursday March 26, 2009--**A team of Australian researchers will today present to the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases Conference a groundbreaking study demonstrating that face masks can be effective in preventing flu and colds.

“Parents of children with colds and flu who complied with wearing a face mask in their family homes were four times more likely to be protected than people who did not wear a mask,” said Raina MacIntyre, a member of the research team and Head of School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales.

The study of some 286 adults with exposure to respiratory infections in the Australian winters of 2006 and 2007 also showed that less than half the parents wore the mask when they were supposed to.

#### **Unprecedented increases in the prevalence of HIV among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Asia alarming public health officials**

The HIV epidemic among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Asia is a serious crisis that demands greater resources for prevention, treatment, and research, a leading international HIV/AIDS specialist will tell the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases Conference today.

Across Asia, the odds of HIV infection in MSM are 18.7 times higher than the general population. Surveys of MSM in Bangkok documented prevalence rates of 18% in 2003, to 28% in 2005, to 31% in 2007 – while the national prevalence was 1.4% in 2007.

“The data we do have clearly shows us that unless we change the course of the HIV epidemic among MSM in Asia, it will overtake new infection rates in every other high-risk group in the region,” said Dr Annette Sohn, Director of TREAT Asia.

Some 300 scientists, academics and medical practitioners are attending the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases Annual Scientific Conference 2009 being held at the Cypress Lakes Resort in the Hunter Valley, NSW. The conference runs from Wednesday March 25 - Saturday March 28.

**Day 3 (Friday March 27<sup>th</sup>) highlights include:**

- Eduardo Gotuzzo, Principal Professor of Medicine, Infectious Diseases, and Tropical Medicine at Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, Lima, Peru, **HTLV-I a complex clinical pattern in a neglected disease;**
- Karin Leder, Head of Travel Medicine and Immigrant Health, Royal Melbourne Hospital, **Update on Travel Medicine**

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Conference programme available at <http://www.asid.net.au/meetings/mediacentre.asp>