

Medical News

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17th International Congress of Chemotherapy (ICC) Meeting Focuses on New Treatments for Cancer, AIDS, and Infectious Diseases

Approximately 10,000 infectious disease experts met in Berlin, Germany, June 26, 1991, to discuss the latest advances in cancer, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and antimicrobial therapy.

Advances in immunomodulators and immunomodifiers, such as growth factors, cytokines, interleukins, and interferons, and developments in antimicrobial, antiviral, and antiparasitic agents were among the topics at the congress.

Part of this year's ICC scientific agenda is to examine resistance to antimicrobial agents and antibiotic policy on a worldwide basis. The global impact of bacterial resistance to antibiotics was the first major symposium at the congress, with reports from France, Spain, the United States, and Sweden. "Bacterial resistance to antibiotics causes the same problems globally as it does in the United States—mortality, morbidity, and lost productivity," said Clyde Thornsberry, MD, of Nashville, Tennessee.

"The introduction of newer, stronger antimicrobial agents with better pharmacokinetic profiles, coupled with the introduction of a global policy on the rational administration of these agents, will help physicians combat resistant bacterial strains," he said.

According to Dieter Adam, MD, of Munich, Germany, pathogens like *Legionella*, *Chlamydia*, *Mycobacterium*, and others are on the rise, and there is no doubt about the need for newer, more potent agents to manage the infections they cause. "The advanced macrolides will make it possible to treat patients with infection due to atypical pathogens, which are now estimated to cause 30% of respiratory infections in the United States," he said.

Opportunistic infections in AIDS patients also was a focus of this year's congress. According to Dr. Adam, *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, atypical mycobacterial pathogens, tuberculosis, fungal infections, toxoplasmosis, and cryptosporidiosis continue to plague efforts to treat AIDS patients.

Institut Merieux and Merck & Co. to Create Research and Marketing Partnership for Childhood Vaccines in the United States

In June 1991, Merck & Co., Inc. and Institut Merieux signed a letter of intent to collaborate on the development and marketing of combination vaccines, as well as to promote selected vaccine products in the United States.

The research collaboration will enable the companies to pool their resources to expedite the development of vaccines that combine a number of different antigens to protect children against a variety of diseases, such as *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, hepatitis B, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, and poliomyelitis. This could help achieve higher immunization rates and have a favorable impact on the overall cost of pediatric immunizations.

In addition, the companies will address another public health concern: the need for improved access to vaccines through enhanced awareness and distribution. To that end, they have agreed to promote a number of each other's vaccine products.

Prevention of disease through immunization is clearly preferable to the costs of disease and treatment, the companies said. The letter of intent states that as soon as practical, the parties will discuss the possibility of expanding the collaboration to Canada, some European countries, and other markets.