The American Sexually Transmitted Diseases Association (ASTDA) proposes to bring the 25th ISSTDR & 24th World IUSTI Meeting 2023 back to the United States. ASTDA is the preeminent professional association of STD researchers, practitioners, and prevention specialists in the U.S. and Canada. In addition, ASTDA officially functions as the North American Region of IUSTI, with ASTDA president Barbara (Bobbie) Van Der Pol serving as the IUSTI North American Chair and ASTDA executive committee member Cornelis (Kees) Rietmeijer serving as the Regional Director. ASTDA represents the best of cutting-edge basic and clinical science related to STD in North America and we would welcome the opportunity to host the 2023 ISSTDR and IUSTI joint meeting in Chicago, a destination city for meetings and conventions in the U.S.

Chicago’s municipal symbol, a Y shape in a circle representing the intersection of the city’s three rivers, is incorporated into the meeting logo to reflect our proposed conference theme: the Real World of STD Prevention. This is the title of a standing section in Sexually Transmitted Diseases, the official journal of ASTDA. This reflects our belief that the goal of research in the STD field is ultimately to improve management and program strategies that prevent infection and transmission of these diseases. The process of translating scientific research into practice is complex. While basic and translational research ultimately influence best practices that are in turn adopted by the medical community, in the real world this process is not entirely linear. Through this joint meeting, we intend to examine the intersection of basic science, clinical science, behavioral science, epidemiologic research. We will consider their impact on best practices in public health, STD diagnosis, treatment, and prevention, from the perspective of an international community working to improve sexual health and wellbeing.

As the co-sponsor and key organizer of such conferences as the STD Prevention Conference and the HIV Diagnostics Conference, ASTDA has extensive experience in conference planning and management and is well poised to stage a financially and programmatically successful meeting that maintains the high standards set by ISSTDR and IUSTI. ASTDA is committed to rejuvenating the STD workforce and providing career development opportunities for young investigators. We hope to use the meeting to continue our work fostering the academic careers of young investigators and encouraging their enthusiasm for our field. Further, a part of our mission is the dissemination of evidence in support of best-practices. The joint meeting will give us an international forum for placing emphasis on early- and mid-career investigators in multiple ways while providing an international forum for sharing cutting edge research and program science.
WHY CHOOSE ASTDA

CREDIBILITY

- ASTDA’s diverse membership includes basic scientists, researchers, clinicians, epidemiologists, public health officials, and disease intervention specialists. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, our flagship journal, is one of the leading venues in the world for cutting-edge basic and clinical science related to STD important to everyone working in the area.
- ASTDA members have contributed their expertise to national and international scientific and programmatic committees and meetings for many years.
- Our quarterly STD Prevention Science Series brings lectures on cutting edge issues by scientists and program experts of world renown focused on research and best practices for STD prevention.
- ASTDA closely collaborates with other organizations advocating for STD prevention in the U.S., each serving different constituents: ASTDA represents clinicians and researchers; the National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD) is comprised of STD program officials and disease intervention specialists; and the American Sexual Health Association (ASHA) which advocates for sexual health and STD prevention to the general public. We collaborate closely with each other and with the US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the National Network of STD Prevention Training Centers (NNPTC) in developing a shared agenda.

EXPERIENCE

- ASTDA, in collaboration with ASHA, has extensive experience planning and organizing successful conferences, both in the U.S. and internationally.
- Executive committee member Lynn Barclay, president & CEO of ASHA, has managed the biennial National STD Prevention Conference since 2012 and the HIV Diagnostics Conference since 2016, among others. She also assisted with the management of the ISSTDR/IUSTI World STI & HIV Congress 2017.
- Several ASTDA executive committee members have served as scientific committee chairs and meeting organizers for U.S. and international conferences.

CONNECTIONS

As mentioned above, ASTDA functions as the North American Region of IUSTI, with IUSTI membership extended to all ASTDA members. ASTDA executive committee members J. Dennis Fortenberry and H. Hunter Handsfield also serve in leadership positions with IUSTI World Executive Committee (ExCo).

- ASTDA president Bobbie Van Der Pol served two terms on the ISSTDR board and currently serves in the position of secretary general. This tenure offers the necessary continuity of experience with the planning of this joint meeting.
- The strong collaborative relationships among ASTDA and other organizations (including CDC, NIH, NCSD, and the NNPTC to name a few) will allow us to involve colleagues with a wide diversity of perspectives and expertise.
- As a first, we plan to coordinate the ISSTDR Meeting with the National Sexual Health Conference (NSHC). NSHC is a biennial conference, held since 2013, that attracts an audience that is complimentary to the traditional ISSTDR attendance, including sex researchers, family planning and other sexual health practitioners and advocates. We are working with the NSHC organizers to coordinate the ISSTDR meeting with the Sexual Health Conference so that we have a day of overlap to encourage sharing of perspectives. *(see letter of support from NSHC)* The NSHC would start on Wednesday and continue after the conclusion of the ISSTDR meeting. This type of overlap was very well received in 2015 in Brisbane where the ISST-DR/IUSTI meeting overlapped with the Australian Sexual Health Alliance annual HIV meeting.
WHY CHOOSE CHICAGO

Over 52 million people visit Chicago annually. The city is a top choice for both U.S. and international tourists as well as one of the top three cities for meetings and conventions in the country. From iconic architecture, world-renowned museums, award-winning theater, and a vibrant dining scene, Chicago has a lot to offer.

A WORLD-CLASS DESTINATION
ASTDA proposes to host the meeting in an area of Chicago known as the Magnificent Mile. Located in the heart of downtown Chicago, the Magnificent Mile district is one of the most vibrant and successful commercial, cultural and tourist areas in the world. The area is home to a wide variety of attractions, including the Art Institute of Chicago (with the largest collection of Impressionist and Post-impressionist art outside the Louvre), Lookingglass Theatre Company, the Field Museum, the Navy Pier and more. Overall, Chicago boasts more than 250 theaters, 200 dance companies, 56 museums, 700 public art works, 46 historic districts, 26 miles of lakefront with an 18.5-mile lakefront path, 8,100 acres of green space with 580 parks and 26 beaches.

ACCESSIBLE FOR TRAVELERS
Chicago is served by two first-class airports—Midway International Airport and O’Hare International Airport—with 80 carriers and their regional airline partners. With more than 1000 daily direct flights from more than 160 U.S. cities and 72 nonstop international flights, Chicago is convenient from cities across the U.S. and around the globe. Both airports are roughly an hour’s drive from downtown Chicago with many public transportation options available.

PREMIUM ACCOMMODATIONS
While Chicago has many options for conference space, ASTDA proposes the Sheraton Grand, Chicago’s premier downtown riverfront hotel. Located within walking distance of Navy Pier, Millennium Park, Michigan Avenue shopping, the Art Institute and the Loop District, the Sheraton Grand offers top-tier convention space with 43 event rooms and 125,000 ft² total event space.

DIVERSE CULTURES AND CUISINES
Known as a “city of neighborhoods,” Chicago has 77 diverse communities each with their own distinctive history, attractions, and cuisine. The city has one of the largest Chinatown neighborhoods in the country, a bustling commercial area in Andersonville with a strong Swedish and LGBTQ presence, and in Pilsen an abundance of Mexican-American shops, art galleries and street art, and authentic eateries.

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS
Chicago is a walking city with an easy-to-navigate downtown grid. For those venturing further out, public transportation is in Chicago is easy and affordable with light rail and abundant taxis or ride share options. Additionally, Chicago has been named one of the best bicycling cities in the U.S. by Bicycling Magazine, due to its many shared or buffered bike lanes and urban trails tailor-made for cyclists. The Divvy bike-share program has 580+ stations and 5,800 bikes across the city for easy access.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES
Chicago’s official motto is “Urbs in horto,” a Latin phrase meaning “City in a Garden.” With 580 parks, dozens of gardens and 8,300 acres of grass, flowers and trees, the city lives up to that name and offers visitors plenty of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. With average temperatures of 82°F (28°C) in July, a visit to the beach is also an option, with 26 free beaches along the waterfront.
COMMITTEES

The organizing and scientific committees, which are not yet finalized, will draw from members of the ASTDA executive committee (listed below) with expertise in STD/HIV prevention research, epidemiology, and clinical practice. We will also be able to draw from our large network of collaborators both in North America and around the world. Our “local” organizing committee will be comprised of researchers and public health professionals drawn from ASTDA's broad membership, including professionals in Chicago (see letters of support), since we are not restricted to a single academic institution and we can draw on the entire membership of ASTDA.

Barbara Van Der Pol, PhD, MPH
Associate Professor, University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine, Department of Infectious Diseases, Birmingham, AL
Van Der Pol has been involved in laboratory-based epidemiologic and behavioral research in the field of STIs and HIV for more than 30 years. She participated in writing the CDC STD Diagnostic Laboratory Guidelines and the WHO STD/HIV Laboratory Diagnostics Manual, and also evaluated novel methods for STI detection. She has served on organizing committees for national and international conferences and has served on the ISSTDR Board since 2009.

Khalil Ghanem, MD, PhD
Associate Professor of Medicine and Deputy Director of Education in the Department of Medicine, at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, Baltimore, MD
Ghanem's research focuses on genitourinary infections—in particular syphilis and the vaginal microbiome. He is/was a consultant to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on the development of the 2010, 2015, and 2020 Adult Syphilis Treatment Guidelines.

Abby Norris Turner, PhD
Associate Professor, Division of Infectious Diseases, College of Medicine, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
Norris Turner's work over the past 10 years in Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Thailand, South Africa, Mexico and other regions includes numerous HIV and STI prevention projects.

J. Dennis Fortenberry, MD
Professor of Pediatrics, Indiana University School of Medicine, Indianapolis, IN
Fortenberry is a member of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, the Society for Adolescent Health & Medicine, the International Academy for Sex Research, the American STD Association, and the Society for Scientific Study of Sex. Clinically, Dr. Fortenberry directs the Child and Adolescent Gender Health Program at Riley Hospital for Children at IU Health.

Laura H. Bachmann, MD, MPH
Atlanta, GA
Bachmann specializes in STD and HIV care with more than 15 years of experience practicing in both university and public health settings. She is an expert in the diagnosis and management of STDs and HIV and serves as a consultant to the CDC STD Treatment Guidelines. She has performed research addressing a variety of STD/HIV control issues.

Kyle Bernstein, PhD, ScM
Branch Chief, Epidemiology and Statistics Branch, Division of STD Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA
Bernstein has extensive experience conducting innovative epidemiologic research in both academic and public health settings. He is a recognized expert and leader in the field of STD/HIV prevention epidemiologic research and has authored or coauthored more than 90 scientific journal articles.

Julie Dombrowski, MD, MPH
Assistant Professor of Medicine, University of Washington; Deputy Director of the Public Health, Seattle and King County HIV/STD Program, Seattle, WA
Dombrowski's research focuses on the delivery of HIV and STD clinical services and population-based approaches to improving the HIV care continuum. She is the Medical Director of the Public Health – Seattle & King County STD Clinic and oversees the King County HIV Care and ART Promotion Program, a project to improve engagement in HIV care and antiretroviral use in King County.

H. Hunter Handsfield, MD
Seattle, WA
Professor Emeritus of Medicine, University of Washington Center for AIDS and STD, and former director of the Sexually Transmitted Diseases Control Program for Public Health—Seattle & King County, Seattle, Washington. He has been at the forefront of STD research and prevention for four decades. He chaired the 2007 ISSTDR Meeting in Seattle.
Katherine K. Hsu, MD, MPH
Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, MA

In addition to her work in the school of medicine, Hsu serves Medical Director in the Division of STD Prevention & HIV/AIDS Surveillance as a part of the Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Her research interests include STDs and syndromes in adolescents and young adults, post-sexual assault care in adolescents and young adults, and vaccine preventable diseases in adolescents and young adults.

Cornelis A. (Kees) Rietmeijer, MD, PhD
Professor, Community & Behavioral Health, Colorado School of Public Health, University of Colorado Denver, Denver, CO

Rietmeijer has a long-standing career in STD research and practice and was the director of the Denver STD control program and the Denver Metro Health (STD) Clinic until his retirement in 2009. He continues to serve as the medical director of the Denver STD Prevention Training Center and as the director of the North American Region of IUSTI.

Anne Rompalo, MD
Professor of Medicine, Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, Baltimore, MD

Rompalo has lectured for over 20 years in the fields of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV and has served as the medical director of the STD/HIV Prevention Training Center (PTC) for over 15 years. She also served as acting medical director for the Baltimore City Health Department sexually transmitted disease clinics, and has been principal investigator of a Baltimore HIV epidemiology research study.

Marc Steben, MD
Medical Director, Clinique A, Montreal, Canada

Steben is a professor at the School of Public Health at Université de Montréal and the medical director of Clinique A, a clinic devoted to multidisciplinary approach to sexual health. He also chairs Quebec province committee on STI and is a member of the STI laboratory analysis committee. He is a founding member of IUSTI Canada branch of IUSTI North America.

LOGISTICS AND CONFERENCE MANAGEMENT

ASTDA is a national organization that attracts members at institutions from across the U.S. and Canada. Our recent partnership with IUSTI North America expands our reach even further. This affords us the opportunity to draw on the expertise and strength from our large and diverse membership for our organizing committee. We will not be limited to a single institution or entity to provide support or assume financial risk.

The American Sexual Health Association (ASHA) will serve as the professional conference organizer for the meeting. Lynn Barclay, president and CEO of the ASHA, has extensive experience in conference organizing and management, handling program development, branding and materials development, on-site management and logistical support, marketing and promotion, and more. Her expertise was called upon by ISSTDR and IUSTI in 2017 to assist with management of the ISSTDR-IUSTI World Congress in Rio, and she has been instrumental in planning the STD Prevention Conference in conjunction with the CDC for several years. She and her organization will work closely with ASTDA in all aspects of logistics and conference management.
April 26, 2019

Dr. Barbara Van Der Pol, PhD, MPH
President,
American Sexually Transmitted Diseases Association

Dear Dr. Van Der Pol,

As the director of the North American Region of the International Union Against Sexually Transmitted Infections (IUSTI), it is my great pleasure to offer you my strong support and collaboration in your bid to host the 25th Meeting of the International Society for STD Research and 24th World IUSTI Congress in Chicago, July 22-26, 2023. As the proposed theme, The Real World of STD Prevention and the logo for the Meeting imply, it takes a strong collaboration between science, clinical practice, and public health efforts to achieve the ultimate goal of STD prevention and eradication. The American Sexually Transmitted Diseases Association (ASTDA) is uniquely positioned to address these themes as it draws on a membership comprised of prominent STD researchers, clinical experts, and public health leaders from across the United States and Canada. Moreover, ASTDA has an excellent track record of organizing conferences on the scale of ISSTDR, including the highly successful 2016 and 2018 National STD Prevention Conferences and the 2015 and 2019 HIV Diagnostics Conferences, both in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Moreover, current members of the ASTDA Executive Committee have an established working relationship that will position them well to start the organizational preparatory work under your leadership.

Historically, ISSTDR Meetings have been convened by local organizing committees, typically drawn from a single academic institution with strong STD credentials. Given the paucity of STD centers of excellence, both nationally and internationally, the sustainability of this model is questionable. The alternative you are proposing where a thriving regional organization is taking the lead in developing the conference, is therefore both innovative and exciting.

With the formal integration of ASTDA and IUSTI North America in 2015, the Director of the North American Region of IUSTI became an Ex-Officio member of the ASTDA Executive Committee. It is in that capacity that I pledge my full support to your bid and will work with you on this very exciting opportunity.

Very best wishes,

Kees Rietmeijer, MD, PhD, MSPH
Director, North American Region
International Union Against Sexually Transmitted Infections