

Capitol Hill News

by Will Lang



Working to improve world's health

The interest of U.S. academic pharmacy in working to improve health status around the world holds great promise. Federal policy and legislation that would support this type of activity is primarily focused on the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID is responsible for oversight and administration of the majority of the programs authorized in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). PEPFAR is currently being reauthorized by Congress. The House passed HR 5501, the "Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008," on April 2. The Senate placed its bill, SB 2731, on the calendar April 15.

Both the House and Senate bills contain sections addressing health workforce development that is facilitated through nongovernmental organizations working in partnership with private partners. The workforce development provisions address the critical issue of educating and retaining at least 140,000 health care professionals with U.S. support.

The House and Senate bills also contain provisions that address other important health care policy issues such as care coordination, prevention, treatment and program monitoring. Additionally, the proposals contain provisions addressing the use, distribution, and safe-keeping of pharmaceuticals used to treat AIDS, TB and malaria.

An example of a nongovernmental organization (NGO) working to address the PEPFAR goals is the International Training and Education Center on HIV (I-TECH). I-TECH is a

collaboration between the Health Resources and Services Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, founded in 2002. I-TECH has greatly benefited from the past and ongoing work of the AIDS Education Training Centers (AETC) which are supported by grants awarded by the HRSA HIV/AIDS Office. While I-TECH has programs that work toward meeting almost all the PEPFAR goals, it has taken a leadership role in creating HIV/AIDS education and training materials for health care professionals around the world. I-TECH is an important example of an academic-based collaboration between the University of Washington and the University of California, San Francisco.

I-TECH has a very rich Web site that describes its programs. Most importantly it has links for individuals interested in finding out more about its programs and how they might participate in them. It also has a page focused on students including internships and volunteer opportunities. You can visit the I-TECH Web site by going to www.go2itech.org.

To find out more about the HRSA AETCs, go to: <http://hab.hrsa.gov/educating.htm>.

Information about HRSA's international programs is available at:

<http://hab.hrsa.gov/special/global.htm>.

To find out more about CDC's international programs, go to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/cogh/index.htm>.

The USAID's Web site is available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/>.