44-Member AIDS Coalition Issues Statement of HIV Risk When Undetectable

The AIDS United Public Policy Committee also has signed on to the consensus statement issued by Prevention Access Campaign.

March 9, 2017

The AIDS United Public Policy Committee (PPC) has released its own statement regarding the sexual transmission risk of a person living with HIV who is on treatment and has an undetectable viral load. The PPC statement also lists three ways the information can be applied in the real world.

As the nation's largest and longest-running coalition of community-based HIV/AIDS groups, AIDS United PPC includes 44 members, such as AIDS Alabama, Housing Works, Los Angeles LGBT Center, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, the Latino Commission on AIDS, the National Black Justice Coalition, Project Inform and the Harm Reduction Coalition.

Dated March 6, 2017, the AIDS United PPC statement reads as follows:

> Substantial evidence strongly demonstrates that a person living with HIV who has a sustained, undetectable viral load cannot sexually transmit HIV to another person. Continued analysis of large-scale clinical trials has shown zero cases of HIV sexual transmission. This expands on prior data that the risk of HIV transmission from a person living with HIV who is on antiretroviral therapy and has achieved an undetectable viral load (viral suppression) in their blood for at least 6 months is negligible to non-existent.
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> Too many people living with HIV are not getting the message of this benefit of treatment and sustained viral suppression from their clinical providers or the HIV education and advocacy community. Understanding that maintaining viral suppression through successful anti-retroviral therapy not only maintains health but also prevents transmission can encourage people living with HIV to initiate and adhere to treatment regimens and may help reduce HIV-related stigma. We acknowledge, however, that social and structural barriers exist that prevent some people living with HIV from achieving viral suppression.

> Outdated HIV criminalization laws and policies in the U.S. do not reflect the current science related to HIV transmission risks. Scientific evidence about the reality of transmission risk based in this data about viral suppression and transmission risk has already had an impact on HIV criminalization statutes and prosecutions in Europe.
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> Therefore, AIDS United recommends:
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> 1. That providers and educators consistently share the message that new evidence demonstrates that a person living with HIV who has a sustained, undetectable viral load cannot sexually transmit HIV to another person.
> 2. That the Department of Health and Human Services Antiretroviral Guidelines Committee examine this issue further and consider updating Guidelines language.
> 3. That HIV criminal laws and policies in the United States be modernized to reflect the science related to viral suppression and HIV transmission risk.

In a press release about the PPC statement, AIDS United president and CEO Jesse Milan Jr. called the transmission evidence "a landmark development" that not enough people were hearing about. "This is a game changer because it makes achieving viral suppression bigger than people living with HIV taking care of their own health, it is also about taking care of others too. This development puts each one of us living with HIV at the forefront of stopping new infections, and gives everyone strong, clear and direct language to stop the stigma and move all communities faster towards ending the epidemic."

In addition, AIDS United has signed on to the consensus statement issued by Prevention Access Campaign. That statement reads:

> People living with HIV on ART with an undetectable viral load in their blood have a negligible risk of sexual transmission of HIV. Depending on the drugs employed it may take as long as six months for the viral load to become undetectable. Continued and reliable HIV suppression requires selection of appropriate agents and excellent adherence to treatment. HIV viral suppression should be monitored to assure both personal health and public health benefits.

For related POZ articles, read "NASTAD Releases Statement of HIV Transmission Risk When Undetectable" and "Does Undetectable Mean Uninfectious? The Challenge of Explaining HIV Study Results" or click #Undetectable.

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