



Awards to Advance Viral Load Detection

Three companies receive more than \$4 million in funds.

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The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has awarded more than \$4 million in funds and support services to three diagnostic technology developers as part of the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx) Tech's Advanced Platforms for HIV Viral Load Monitoring program.

Launched in 2024 by the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB), in collaboration with the NIH Office of AIDS Research and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the program is aimed at advancing HIV viral load detection technologies for use at the point of care.

The awardees are Cepheid in Sunnyvale, California; Baebies, Inc., in Durham, North Carolina; and Prompt Diagnostics in Baltimore.

NIH-supported research has shown that when the virus is undetectable in the bloodstream of people living with HIV who are on effective treatment, sexual transmission does not occur—a concept known as Undetectable Equals Untransmittable (U=U). U=U is a game changer because it enables people with HIV and their partners to be in a relationship without fear of transmitting HIV.

HIV is still in the body when viral load is suppressed, even when it is undetectable. Under some circumstances, HIV viral load may increase to detectable levels, leading to the potential for viral transmission and disease progression.

“For those with HIV, easy access to viral load monitoring empowers them to protect their health and helps prevent viral transmission,” said Bruce J. Tromberg, PhD, NIBIB director and leader of the RADx Tech program. “NIH support is aimed at making rapid progress in point-of-care HIV viral load detection technologies so that this information is readily available on demand for all who want it.”

The awards mark the advancement of these projects to receive individual contracts and begin milestone-driven activities during 2025. Each technology will be honed under the guidance of a national network of expert technical, clinical, commercialization and regulatory advisers assembled by the RADx Tech program.

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