Health Economist: Obama Must Build on PEPFAR

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Health economist Mead Over says that a primary goals of the Barack Obama White House should be to maintain and build upon President George W. Bush's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which has provided lifesaving antiretroviral treatment to millions of people living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries since its launch in 2003, *Voice of America News* reports.

"The biggest challenge for the next president will be to make sure that the quality and the sustainability of the treatment is maintained," Over said. "But at the same time he must try to strengthen the prevention effort."

In a recent paper, Over writes: "The U.S. government has funded a great many innovative and in some cases very successful prevention efforts. But the problem is that most prevention has been operated on a very small scale, small boutique operations in small groups of intravenous drug users or sex workers, which have achieved substantial success but have been swamped by the ongoing epidemic around them."

Over suggests that Obama's administration must bolster efforts to track HIV cases in PEPFAR recipient countries and establish the hot spots where the most infections are taking place, such as African truck stops.

"There has been no country in Africa that has attempted that…sort of universal coverage…. and the U.S. government should lead countries to that kind of ambitious effort," Over advised.

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