Here’s Some Upbeat HIV News From Across the Pond

Courtesy of the Scottish police, Amsterdam and four cities in Ireland

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Law enforcement officers in the United States could take a lesson from the Scottish police. When an HIV organization inquired whether the police recorded a person’s HIV status in its database, which could result in discrimination, the force looked into the situation, discovered that it did and decided to end the practice.

Specifically, people with HIV will no longer be marked as “contagious” in the police database, and existing data detailing a person’s HIV status will be removed, reports BBC.com.

“Clearly, this is welcome news from Police Scotland,” Nathan Sparling, chief executive of HIV Scotland, the group that raised the issue, told BBC.com, adding that he hopes the news will help get the word out that people living with HIV who take meds and maintain a suppressed viral load cannot transmit HIV through sex, even if condoms are not used. This fact is often referred to as Undetectable Equals Untransmittable, or U=U.

But Sparling questioned whether the police will “review activity that has led to people living with HIV being targeted or discriminated against because of their HIV status.” He also pointed out that HIV Scotland’s inquiry underscored that police regulations “place a greater emphasis on the retention of information and places the burden on organizations to justify why information is being retained—so can they clarify why the information was retained in the first place.”

In other HIV news from across the Atlantic, four cities in Ireland have joined the HIV Fast-Track Cities initiative, a global effort led by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care.

The cities are Limerick, Dublin, Cork and Galway. They made the announcement in conjunction with Irish AIDS Day, held each June 15.

Launched in 2014, the Fast-Track Cities initiative aims to end the AIDS epidemic in global cities by 2030. More than 300 cities and municipalities have joined the effort, including over 20 in the United States. See the full list here. To view data on each city, visit Fast-TrackCities.org.

Also in 2014, UNAIDS launched its related 90-90-90 targets:

- 90% of people living with HIV know their status
- 90% of people diagnosed with HIV are on treatment
- 90% of people on treatment are virally suppressed.

In a September 2019 update on Fast-Track Cities, UNAIDS reported that London and Amsterdam were the first cities to reach the 90-90-90 goals. Since then, two other cities in the United Kingdom achieved the targets.

And now comes even more good news from Amsterdam. After seeing a steep decline in the number of HIV diagnoses, the capital of the Netherlands has set the goal of zero new HIV cases in 2026.

As TheMayor.eu reports, 60 people tested positive for HIV in 2019, which marks a 40% decline from the nearly 100 cases a year in recent years. In total, about 6,000 people with HIV live in Amsterdam, and experts say about 300 people in the city have HIV but are unaware of their status, a figure that advocates hope to reduce in the near future.

In related news, see "NYC Is the First U.S. Fast-Track City to Meet the 90-90-90 HIV Goals."

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