U.S. to Send 12,000 Doses of HIV Meds to Venezuelans in Colombia

That's enough to treat 1,000 immigrants for one year.

August 29, 2019 By Trent Straube

The United States will send 12,000 doses of HIV meds to treat Venezuelans who have immigrated to Colombia, Reuters reports. That's enough to supply a year's worth of antiretrovirals to 1,000 immigrants.

As a result of economic and political upheaval in Venezuela, more than 4 million people have fled the country, many to neighboring Colombia. Earlier this year, it was reported that the HIV situation in Venezuela was "critical and alarming" and that people with HIV were dying because the government kept supplies of the lifesaving meds on a military base. (It claimed it did not have working trucks to distribute the medicine.) Police also raided HIV/AIDS service organizations and seized meds and infant formula from workers there.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar told Reuters about the shipments of HIV meds after he met with health officials from 10 other countries to discussion the situation in Colombia.

"We believe that it's vital to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and to treat those who have it because with appropriate treatment individuals who have HIV/AIDS can live healthy, long, productive lives," Azar told Reuters.

What's more, people with HIV who take meds and maintain an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV sexually, a fact referred to as undetectable equals untransmittable, or U=U.

To illustrate the growing health challenge Colombia is facing, Reuters reports that in many hospitals along the border, most of the women giving birth are Venezuelan, not Colombian, and haven't received proper prenatal care.

The United States does not recognize the leadership of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and instead supports Juan Guaidó as the country's legitimate leader.

For related stories in POZ, read "'Grave Concern' for People Living With HIV in Venezuela," "Unable to Get Meds, Venezuelans With HIV Turn to Guásimo" and "AIDS Threatens Indigenous People of Venezuela."

Plus, read “Beyond Ourselves,” a profile on Venezuelan native Jesús Aguais. He founded Aid for AIDS, which helps provide recycled HIV meds to people in 43 countries around the world. For more, visit AidForAIDS.org.

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