Vatican to Roll Out ’Treatment as Prevention’ for People With HIV

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The Catholic Church will provide “treatment as prevention,” or TasP, in a pilot program that could involve 140,000 HIV-positive people in Tanzania, the Globe and Mail reports.

TasP refers to the concept of testing more people for HIV and providing those who are HIV positive with medications that lower their viral load while increasing their health. People with lower viral loads are less likely to transmit the virus, hence the term “treatment as prevention.”

Julio Montaner, MD, a renowned AIDS doctor working in Canada, pioneered the TasP model, according to the newspaper. At the Vatican, he recently met with the pope and the church’s health leaders, who said they would roll out a pilot TasP program in Tanzania that would likely offer treatment for several years.

“If one considers that health-care services in the poorest areas of the world are often in the hands of the denominational institutions, the fact they are actively interested and involved [in TasP] is extremely promising,” Montaner told the newspaper. “The Roman Catholic Church, with all its infrastructure and outreach, would be a fantastic addition to what we’re trying to achieve.”

Globally, about a quarter of all people living with HIV receive care through the church’s 5,000 hospitals and 9,000 orphanages.

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