COVID-19 Vaccine Testing Must Include People Living With HIV

To not include the 1.2 million people with HIV in the United States is dangerous and irresponsible

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The race to create a vaccine for the coronavirus is well underway. But in the race to find a vaccine, those of us living with HIV cannot be left behind.

And yet, that's exactly what happened earlier this month when Moderna published protocols for a vaccine trail that excluded people "in an immunosuppressive or immunodeficient state, including human immunodeficiency virus infection." That's despite the protocols also encouraging "healthy adults or adults with preexisting medical conditions in stable condition," to join the trial.

Advocates were quick to point out the specific exclusion will cause confusion, and could have led to people living with HIV who are eager to participate in the study to be turned away.

A letter, written by Lynda Dee of AIDS Action Baltimore, outlines the multiple reasons why there is no reason for the HIV exclusion to exist in any COVID-19 vaccine trial. AIDS United was among the signatories for this important work.

Among these reasons is the fact that individuals adhering to antiretroviral therapy do not have immunosuppression because their medications stop the replication of the virus and allow CD4 and T-cell counts to return pre-infection rates. This enables those who are living with HIV to control their viral load count and lead healthy lives.

To exclude those of us living with HIV from COVID-19 vaccine trials with no scientific basis is unconscionable.

We are happy to announce that the hard work and advocacy of many has paid off. Moderna recently announced that the phase III clinical trial would include people living with HIV.

While this was a victory to those living with, impacted by, and vulnerable to HIV, we must continue to fight so that all other vaccine trials also include people living with HIV.

All vaccines trials must include people living with HIV. To not include the 1.2 million people living with HIV is dangerous and irresponsible.

AIDS United will continue to fight to ensure that all clinical trials for a COVID-19 vaccine include people living with HIV.

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