

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS welcomes new findings that provide an additional tool for HIV prevention for people who inject drugs

GENEVA, 12 June 2013—The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) welcomes new findings announced today that an antiretroviral medicine, taken daily as a prophylaxis, can reduce the risk of HIV infection by 49% for HIV-negative men and women who inject drugs.

From 2005-2013 the study, conducted by the Thai Ministry of Public Health, the United States Centers for Disease Control and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, enrolled 2 413 men and women (80% men and 20% women) who inject drugs in Bangkok, Thailand. HIV-negative volunteers who took a daily dose of the antiretroviral medicine tenofovir as oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) were 49% less likely to become infected with HIV than the volunteers who took the placebo.

“Piece by piece scientific advances are paving the way to the end of the AIDS epidemic,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “The full potential of antiretroviral therapy in keeping people alive and well and in preventing new HIV infections is becoming apparent. The results of this study are important and if used effectively in HIV programming could have a significant impact in protecting people who inject drugs from becoming infected with HIV.”

UNAIDS underlines that no single intervention is completely protective in preventing HIV transmission, which is why UNAIDS advocates strongly for combination prevention. Successful combination harm reduction services, including provision of clean needles and syringes, opioid substitution therapy, accessible health care services together with the removal of punitive laws and collaboration with police and law enforcement strategies have proved effective in preventing new HIV infections among people who inject drugs.

The announcement today complements results from several PrEP trials released over the past few years. In 2010, the iPrEx study found that an antiretroviral drug combination, taken daily as a prophylaxis, in conjunction with use of condoms, reduced the risk of HIV infection by an average of 44% for HIV-negative men and transgender women who have sex with men. In 2011, the Partners PrEP study found that an antiretroviral tablet taken daily by people who are HIV-negative could reduce their risk of acquiring HIV by up to 73%, and the TDF2 trial in Botswana found that a once-daily antiretroviral tablet reduced the risk of acquiring HIV by around 63% in HIV-negative heterosexual men and women. Two other studies (Fem-PrEP and VOICE) showed no protective effect—although this could largely be explained by low levels of adherence to the trial products.

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UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.