

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS is greatly encouraged by news of a possible cure of an HIV-positive man

SEATTLE/GENEVA, 5 March 2019—UNAIDS is greatly encouraged by the news that an HIV-positive man has been functionally cured of HIV. The man was treated by specialists at University College London and Imperial College London for advanced Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2016 using stem cell transplants from a donor who carried a rare genetic mutation. Researchers report that HIV has been undetectable in the man since he stopped taking antiretroviral medicine 18 months ago.

"To find a cure for HIV is the ultimate dream," said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "Although this breakthrough is complicated and much more work is needed, it gives us great hope for the future that we could potentially end AIDS with science, through a vaccine or a cure. However, it also shows how far away we are from that point and of the absolute importance of continuing to focus HIV prevention and treatment efforts."

Stem cell transplants are highly complex, intensive and costly procedures with substantial side-effects and are not a viable way of treating large numbers of people living with HIV. However, the results do offer a greater insight for researchers working on HIV cure strategies and highlight the continuing importance of investing in scientific research and innovation.

The result, reported at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in Seattle, United States of America, is one of only two cases of reported functional cures for HIV. The first was the case of the Berlin patient, Timothy Ray Brown, who received similar treatment for cancer in 2007.

There is currently no cure for HIV. UNAIDS is working to ensure that all people living with and affected by HIV have access to life-saving HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services. In 2017, there were 36.9 million people living with HIV and 1.8 million people became newly infected with the virus. In the same year, almost 1 million people died of AIDS-related illnesses and 21.7 million people had access to treatment.

[END]

Contact

Sophie Barton-Knott | tel. +41 22 791 1697 / +4179 514 6896 | bartonknotts@unaids.org

UNAIDS Media | tel. +41 22 791 42 37 | communications@unaids.org

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 towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.