HIV Treatment as Prevention (TasP)

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Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic...one woman at a time.

#onewomanatatime  #thewellproject
Treatment as prevention (TasP): using HIV treatment to lower the risk of transmitting HIV

- For people living with HIV:
  - Taking HIV drugs can reduce viral load, which means:
    - Less likely to transmit HIV to others
    - *Unable* to transmit HIV through sex (U=U)
    - Feel better because they have a healthier immune system

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In the 1990s, research showed pregnant women living with HIV who used zidovudine (Retrovir or AZT) greatly reduced risk of transmitting HIV to their babies.

Now standard practice to:
- Test pregnant women for HIV
- Provide HIV drugs to women with HIV during pregnancy, delivery, breastfeeding
- Give HIV drugs to babies of women with HIV

With HIV treatment and undetectable viral load, a woman’s chance of transmitting HIV to her baby can be less than 1 in 100.

Called preventing mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) in many parts of the world (term considered stigmatizing to many); also known as preventing perinatal or vertical transmission.

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TasP in Sexually Active Adults

- TasP can help **mixed-status couples** safely conceive
- **PrEP** can also help keep HIV-negative partner negative
- **2011 HTPN 052 study:** HIV treatment and undetectable viral load -> little chance of transmission to HIV-negative partner in mixed-status couple
  - Even when partner living with HIV had no HIV-related symptoms and CD4 count between 350-500 cells/mm³
- **2016 PARTNER study:** No transmission if partner living with HIV has undetectable viral load (U=U)
Treatment with a Public Health Twist

HPTN 052 changed HIV prevention

• Additional tool – treatment – in prevention toolbox

• How it works from public health (vs. individual health) point of view:
  – If enough people living with HIV could be treated so that their viral loads became undetectable
    • They would be much less likely to spread HIV
    • Number of new HIV cases would drop remarkably
    • Called a drop in community viral load

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Treatment with a Public Health Twist

Test and treat strategies:

• Recommend universal HIV testing to identify, then treat, all people living with HIV (millions more than now get treatment)
  – Whatever their CD4 counts or viral loads

• Would require greatly expanded medical services

• Resource-limited countries may not be able to take on these additional public health tasks
  – Ethical concerns about who receives limited supplies of medical services and HIV drugs – those who need them for treatment, or those who need them for prevention, or both?

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Treatment with a Public Health Twist

• How well TasP works can vary depending on factors including:
  – Health care systems’ ability to provide testing, linkage to care, HIV drugs
  – Willingness, ability of people to get tested for HIV
    • HIV-related stigma, discrimination make people less likely to get tested
  – Willingness, ability of people living with HIV to adhere to HIV drug regimens so they remain virally suppressed
Other Methods for Preventing HIV

For HIV-negative people:

• **PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)**
  – Taking drugs before exposure to prevent disease
  – HIV-negative people taking HIV drugs to reduce their risk of getting HIV if exposed to the virus
    • Especially helpful for HIV-negative women who want to get pregnant and whose male partners are living with HIV
    • Promising tool women can use to *prevent HIV without partners' knowledge or cooperation*

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Other Methods for Preventing HIV

For HIV-negative people:

• **PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis)**
  – Taking HIV drugs for +/- 1 month after possible HIV exposure (needle-stick, sex without condom, sexual assault)
  – To be effective, PEP must be taken right away – within first 72 hours after exposure to HIV, if possible

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In Conclusion

Research continues to show *TasP can be a game-changer* in the course of HIV pandemic

*TasP* can not only positively affect health of those living with HIV, but also protect those who are not living with HIV

*Undetectable = Untransmittable*
• To learn more, and for links to articles featuring more details, please read the full fact sheet:
  – HIV Treatment as Prevention (TasP)

• For more fact sheets and to connect to our community of women living with HIV, visit:
  – www.thewellproject.org
  – www.facebook.com/thewellproject
  – www.twitter.com/thewellproject