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Request for funding for PARTNER stage 2 (2014-2017) – Estimating the risk of HIV transmission irrespective of sexual practice

The aim of the ongoing PARTNER study is to estimate HIV transmission from HIV positive to HIV negative partners, particular in partnerships that continue **not** to use condoms consistently and the HIV positive partner is on therapy with a suppressed plasma viral load.

A critical yet still unresolved public health question related to HIV is, whether HIV positive persons on antiretroviral treatment (ART) are still able to transmit HIV to their HIV seronegative sexual partner. The HPTN 052 study gave indications towards the answer to this, but without conclusive evidence for sexual partnerships having condom-less sex and with no information on risk through anal intercourse. The PARTNER study is the only ongoing study worldwide able to comprehensively address the risk of HIV transmission in situations of sexual intercourse without condoms in general, and in particular in situations where a couple have anal intercourse. Support for PARTNER stage 2 will enable us to obtain an estimate of the transmission rate with the same level of precision for anal intercourse as for vaginal intercourse.

More precise knowledge of transmissibility among sero-discordant MSM couples practicing condom-less intercourse will have major public health consequences in areas of the world where anal sex is a major route of forward transmission. Additionally, it will be important for the test and treat concept of reducing ongoing transmission to be able to provide concrete and direct evidence as part of informing MSM couples as well as heterosexual couples of the risks of infecting persons they have anal sex with. PARTNER stage 2 can provide the necessary additional evidence required to inform potential scale up of ART for prevention in MSM, transgender women and others who have anal sex.

Funders of the PARTNER Study – stage 2 will have an outstanding opportunity to finally close the discussion on transmission risk on ART with a definitive study on anal sex – and thereby support clarifying an essential public health problem and potential benefit of ART.

We would like to request that you make a contribution towards funding for this project. Please find enclosed a more detailed project description and budget for the 3 years. Please inform us of any application procedure you have within your organisation for us to seek funds for this. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have further questions.

Yours sincerely,
On behalf of,