



WHAT IS THE RISK OF TRANSMITTING HIV FOR PEOPLE ON HIV TREATMENT WITH A SUPPRESSED VIRAL LOAD ?

A New Study is launched to determine the transmission risk of patients on ART and with a suppressed viral load in their blood

There is increasingly strong evidence that when levels of HIV are kept very low because of antiretroviral therapy (ART), it also reduces the risk of HIV transmission. There are, however, no precise estimates of these risks at very low, so called “undetectable”, levels. There is a particular lack of data for men who have sex with men (MSM). Quantifying this based on today’s treatment is needed to accurately inform public health policy on both treatment and prevention of HIV.

The PARTNER study is an observational study that over two years will follow 1650 sero-different partnerships (one partner HIV positive and one HIV negative). Scheduled to enrol the first partnerships in Autumn 2010, the study will include questionnaires on behaviour linked to clinical information on the HIV positive partner. This study includes counselling about safe sex and transmission risk and participants are actively encouraged and supported to use condoms throughout.

The study is based in the real life context that safe sex is known and understood, but in many cases and for complex reasons, is not always followed in practice. Additionally, condoms break or slip off even with careful use. The main objective is to study the risk of HIV transmission to HIV negative partners, where the HIV-positive partner is on antiretroviral therapy with a viral load < 50 copies/mL. A second aim is to understand why condoms are not consistently in some partnerships.

This is an exciting study, looking to accurately determine the real risk of infection in the new setting of effective treatment. Treatment guidelines already present conflicting interpretations of risk, though they commonly acknowledge the need for accurate data.

This is a study that is actively supported by community organizations who are working for prevention and treatment of HIV.

Funded by the National Institute for Health Research and coordinated collaboratively between University College London, Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust, and Copenhagen HIV Programme (CHIP), the international study will enrol patients from the following countries: United Kingdom, Ireland, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, France, Spain and Portugal.

The study is governed by a steering committee with representation from HIV patient groups, a legal consultant, as well as investigators conducting the study.

For more information, contact **National Co-ordinator name** (details)

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