

The Critical Role of People Living with HIV in shaping Biomedical Prevention Research

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People living with HIV are demanding better access to existing prevention options and the development of new prevention technologies (NPTs). This work must be done in a way that ensures that the sexual and reproductive health and rights of people living with HIV are adequately addressed.

GNP+ convened a working group, composed of members from six regional networks of people living with HIV and partner networks, to help shape its NPT-related work. From September to December 2009 the working group held a series of four teleconferences focused on:

- » key ethical considerations in HIV prevention trials;
- » the involvement of people living with HIV in prevention research;
- » and the use of treatment for prevention.

An online discussion forum provided space for working group members to share regional experiences and perspectives.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The experience of advocating for the ethical conduct of treatment trials allows people living with HIV to make unique and valuable contributions to discussions on HIV prevention research ethics.

People living with HIV have a critically important role to play in advocating for improved access to existing prevention options and for the development of NPTs

People living with HIV should participate in designing appropriate referral and follow-up approaches that link HIV-positive people involved in HIV prevention trials (screened out volunteers, trial participants, study staff) to care, treatment and support services. HIV-positive people should also be involved in designing the risk reduction counseling, recruitment, informed consent and retention strategies in trials.

There are significant questions that remain to be answered about ARV-based prevention, and people living with HIV could contribute to addressing them:

- » ethical issues around testing and making ARVs available for prevention when they are not accessible for treatment in many contexts;
- » the potential for drug resistance, drug sharing and black markets;
- » safety concerns;
- » potential funding barriers and competition between prevention and treatment programmes.

People living with HIV can bring together treatment activists and prevention advocates to ensure that barriers, challenges and concerns related to ARV-based prevention are adequately addressed. This involves ensuring that opportunities presented by NPTs are fully realised and reflect the sexual and reproductive rights and HIV prevention needs of people living with HIV.

OUR RESOURCES

The GNP+ NPT working group produced a discussion paper and toolkit:

- » The Role of People Living with HIV in Biomedical Prevention Research and the Search for New Prevention Tools, [Global Network of People Living with HIV \(GNP+\), 2010 \(Discussion paper\)](#)
- » New Prevention Tools: What Are They? What Is their Relevance for People Living with HIV? [Global Network of People Living with HIV \(GNP+\), 2010 \(Toolkit\)](#)

These documents are available at: www.gnpplus.net/programmes/positive-health-dignity-and-prevention/new-prevention-technologies

NEXT STEPS

The field of biomedical prevention research and NPTs will continue to evolve over the next few years. It is increasingly focused on ARV-based prevention, making it all the more relevant for people living with HIV. One of the advantages of having people living with HIV involved in existing NPT advocacy and research efforts is to help ensure that the experience, rights and interests of HIV-positive people are recognised and addressed. GNP+ will continue to promote the engagement of people living with HIV in this field.

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Partners:

1-Global Network of People living with HIV, Amsterdam, Netherlands; 2-Latin American Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (REDLA+), Sao Paulo, Brazil; 3-HIV Collaborative Fund, ITPC, Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire; 4-NAM, London, United Kingdom; 5-European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG), London, United Kingdom; 6-Asia-Pacific Network of People Living with HIV (APN+), Bangkok, Thailand; 7-International Community of Women living with HIV, Washington DC, United State; 8-Global Network of People living with HIV (GNP+), Amsterdam, Netherlands; 9-Independent Consultant, Quebec, Canada; 10-GNP+NA, El Paso, United States; 11-AIUkrainian Network of People Living with HIV, Kiev, Ukraine; 12-PozFem, London, United Kingdom.