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## Press release:

# People on effective HIV treatment don't pass the virus to sexual partners

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**We're as confident now that undetectable gay men pose no risk of HIV transmission as we already were for heterosexuals, researchers say**

The chance of any HIV-positive person with an undetectable viral load transmitting the virus to a sexual partner is scientifically equivalent to zero, researchers confirmed at the [International AIDS Conference](#) in Amsterdam today.

The PARTNER 2 study results found no cases of HIV transmission between men when one partner had HIV but was on effective treatment. This finding offers further confirmation that an undetectable viral load prevents sexual transmission of HIV. This understanding is frequently expressed as Undetectable equals Untransmittable, or U=U.

PARTNER 2 is an extension of [the PARTNER study](#), which in 2014 indicated that people with an undetectable viral load do not transmit HIV. Men who have sex with men were included in the previous study, but PARTNER 2 was added on to the earlier study to ensure that this finding was at least as certain for gay men as it was for heterosexuals.

It had been speculated that because HIV is transmitted more easily via anal than vaginal sex, the results might not hold for gay men. PARTNER 2 now tells us that U=U holds just as strongly for gay men (and for anal sex) as for heterosexuals.

The 14-country study found no transmissions between gay couples where the HIV-positive partner had a viral load under 200 – even though there were nearly 77,000 acts of condomless sex between them.

A detailed analysis of the research findings is available on NAM's website, [www.aidsmap.com](http://www.aidsmap.com)

PARTNER, together with another study, Opposites Attract, have between them not found a single case of HIV transmission in 126,000 acts of condomless anal sex between partners of differing HIV status.

This new data adds further strength to the [U=U](#) Campaign, whose consensus statement has been signed by NAM and hundreds of other organisations around the world, including the International AIDS Society, which runs the International AIDS Conferences.

Dr Pietro Vernazza, author of the 2008 Swiss Statement, which first affirmed that viral suppression meant that HIV could not be passed on, commented at an earlier conference session, "Those who say that HIV can be transmitted should be able to provide evidence of it." No study has identified a case of sexual transmission from someone who is virally suppressed on treatment.

NAM's Executive Director, Matthew Hodson, commented, "This is the moment when science trumps stigma. This is the moment when facts must conquer fear. The knowledge that when we are undetectable we can't pass the virus on to our sexual partners has the power to encourage people to test and to remain adherent to their treatment. Just as importantly it can have an impact on the way that people with HIV think about themselves, removing some of the stress and fear that many in our communities experience."

Matthew Hodson continued, "The preventative impact of effective HIV treatment underlines the importance of expanding access to treatment and of improving treatment uptake and adherence for all people living with HIV worldwide."

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### Notes for Editors

- *NAM aidsmap is the official online scientific news reporter for the [22nd International AIDS Conference](#).*
- *NAM aidsmap is a trusted source of accessible and accurate information about HIV prevention and treatment.*

### References

Rodger A et al. *Risk of HIV transmission through condomless sex in gay couples with suppressive ART: the PARTNER2 study expanded results in gay men*. 22nd International AIDS Conference, Amsterdam, abstract WEAX0104LB, 2018.

This story appears at: [www.aidsmap.com/page/3311249/](http://www.aidsmap.com/page/3311249/)

- **NAM's mission statement:** NAM exists to support the fight against AIDS with independent, accurate, accessible and comprehensive information. We aim to create and disseminate information resources rooted in the experiences of those most affected, enabling individuals and communities to take action and control in responding to HIV and AIDS.
- Founded in 1987, NAM is one of the world's foremost providers of independent information on HIV and viral hepatitis. With a global audience consisting of people living with HIV, activists and advocates, clinicians, other healthcare workers and NGO staff, NAM delivers reliable, useful and responsive information on all aspects of HIV and related conditions, such as hepatitis.
- NAM's website, [www.aidsmap.com](http://www.aidsmap.com) is viewed over 6 million times a year. Its hepatitis website [www.infohep.org](http://www.infohep.org) is viewed over 100,000 times a year.
- All of NAM's patient information resources are certificated by the Information Standard (IS), the kite mark for trustworthy information. These are the only in-clinic resources available with IS certification.
- NAM's organisation values are useful, reliable, responsive. These values underpin everything NAM does. They are why NAM is a trusted and credible source of high quality information on HIV and viral hepatitis.

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