

Canadian Consensus Statement on the health and prevention benefits of HIV antiretroviral medications and HIV testing

Media Release

Canadian Consensus Statement launches and steps up commitment to HIV response

HIV community called to endorse

(TORONTO, CANADA and DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA; 20 July, 2016): Canada's community-based service and healthcare providers look to answer the global call to end the HIV epidemic with the launch of the *Canadian Consensus Statement on the health and prevention benefits of HIV antiretroviral medications and HIV testing* at the international AIDS 2016 conference being held in Durban, South Africa.

Created with input from leaders and community members across the country, the Canadian Consensus Statement identifies commitments and principles to inform policy and practice in Canada's response to HIV. The Statement provides a road map for achieving the UNAIDS global target to end HIV. Known as 90/90/90, the target, endorsed by Canada's Federal Health Minister Jane Philpott, states that by the year 2020:

- 90 per cent of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status;
- 90 per cent of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy; and
- 90 per cent of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.

"We call on everyone in Canada with a stake in ending the HIV epidemic to sign on to the Canadian Consensus Statement," says Glenn Betteridge, policy researcher at the Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC), one of the three national organizations spearheading the Canadian Consensus initiative. "It is high time we all worked together and promoted greater integration and innovation in policy and programs to better support people throughout the continuum of HIV prevention and treatment services."

Health and human rights central issues

Despite significant scientific and medical advances over the past few years, the HIV epidemic continues to disproportionately affect socially and economically marginalized people in Canada. These include gay, bisexual, Two-Spirited and other men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who use drugs, Indigenous peoples, people from countries with high rates of HIV infection, people from African, Caribbean and Black communities, and newcomers to Canada who face challenges related to their immigration status. Women also face added challenges because of gender inequities that are woven throughout Canadian society.

The Canadian Consensus Statement calls for a comprehensive, community-driven, holistic response that combines HIV treatment and prevention from both health and human rights perspectives.

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Consensus Statement principles and commitments include:

- **Removing barriers to treatment access.** Barriers to access to HIV antiretroviral medications faced by people living with HIV should be recognized and addressed in ways that promote health equity for specific populations disproportionately affected by HIV;
- **Providing access to a range of HIV testing options and service delivery approaches,** including the routine offer of testing. People who request an HIV test should not be unreasonably refused HIV counselling and testing;
- **Increasing the availability of access to PrEP and PEP.** Access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for people at substantial risk of getting HIV and access to post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for people who have had a potential high-risk exposure to HIV are essential components of HIV prevention; and
- **Providing professional development and training.** Education about PrEP and PEP should be implemented for the full range of healthcare and psychosocial and other service providers who need to be engaged in PrEP and PEP access, prescription and adherence support.

“Raising awareness about today’s HIV treatment and prevention options is one key to achieving the 90/90/90 goals,” says Tim Rogers, Director, Knowledge Exchange, CATIE. “People’s health is best protected and promoted when they are able to make fully informed and voluntary decisions about their own medical care. The principles outlined in the Canadian Consensus Statement can help ensure people have the information they need.”

People can endorse the Canadian Consensus Statement at hivconsensusvih.ca. “We invite all those involved in the HIV response in Canada to sign on,” says Bob Leahy, Editor, PositiveLite.com. “Collectively, it’s time we moved beyond the artificial dividing lines between HIV treatment and prevention, traditional healthcare and community support, human rights and public health, and HIV-negative people and those people living with HIV.”

Media:

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To access complete Canadian Consensus Statement: hivconsensusvih.ca

FOR ATTENDEES AT AIDS 2016 IN DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

Poster presentation of Canadian Consensus Statement: Wednesday, July 20, 2016, 12:30-14:30 [Abstract WEPED443]

Informal discussion of the Statement: Thursday, July 21, 15:00-16:00, Canada Pavilion, *Meeting the challenge*

The Canadian Consensus Statement on the health and prevention benefits of HIV antiretroviral medications and HIV testing was prepared by CATIE, CTAC, and PositiveLite.com with input from leaders, community-based organizations and community members with an interest in the HIV response across Canada.