



Global Initiatives to Reduce the Pandemic Situation of HIV/AIDS

Donald Sutherland
WHO, Switzerland

In a simplistic view there are only two things to do about the HIV pandemic situation

1. Prevent new HIV infections
2. Care for those who have HIV

This paper has a brief look at how we are doing and then reviews the global or major initiatives and their contributions:

Reducing HIV incidence

Global estimates indicate that infections are continuing at an alarming rate -About 5 million per year- with rates in some countries rising dramatically in recent years. HIV prevalence globally has been leveling off but has showed no signs of decline. Fortunately, some countries have had excellent success with prevention programs with estimated averted infections in the millions. Recently reported Uganda cohort studies have, however, indicated that stability of HIV prevalence is mainly explained by high mortality in HIV positive persons perhaps masking continuing risk behavior and consequent infections that match the death rates. There is also evidence from developed countries that along with the success of HIV treatment programs and the wide availability of HAART, some populations have continued or even increased their risk behavior and infections have continued. In other situations, despite their proven effectiveness in reducing HIV infections, strategies such as needle and syringe exchange and other harm reduction activities in IDU populations have not been implemented.

Since there are HIV prevention strategies that have been shown to be successful including behavior change following HIV counseling and testing, proactive STI detection and treatment programs, male condom use, syringe and needle exchange programs, blood and tissue donation testing programs, the rapid acceleration of such strategies is an absolute imperative. Unless much greater success is achieved in HIV prevention, the human toll, economic cost and the sheer logistics of scaling up treatment programs will become overwhelming.

Care and treatment of persons with HIV

Evidence has accumulated quickly in the last 5 years that appropriate, simplified anti-retroviral drug

treatment regimens and opportunistic infection prophylaxis programs can have an excellent impact on morbidity and mortality even in and perhaps especially in resource poor settings. Adherence can be very high and access expanded by community preparation and support by family and treatment advisers. Key elements of the successful programs include constant, good quality and appropriate formulations of ART drugs and training and support of an expanded cadre of health care workers capable of rapid scale up. Improved HIV surveillance data have been used to make better assessment of national treatment needs and allow countries to set ART treatment targets.

Examples of major global initiatives

'3 x5' (WHO) 161 countries at the World Health Assembly in 2003 committed to a shared global target to provide antiretroviral therapy to 3 million people living with HIV/AIDS in low and middle income countries by the end of 2005, as an interim target towards the global goal of achieving universal access. Prevention strategies are also to be accelerated.

US President's Initiative for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR): a 5 year 15 billion dollar program in 16 focus countries in which the US Government pledged to;

- support ART treatment for 2 million infected persons,
- prevent 7 million new HIV infections and
- support the care for 10 million people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS including orphans and vulnerable children

Millennium Development Goal (Number 6): 191 UN member states pledged that by 2015 they will have halted and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

Global Vaccine Initiative (G8 endorsement): In June 2004 the G8 committed to endorse and establish a Global Vaccine Initiative

Global Fund for AIDS Tuberculosis and Malaria: A major funding mechanism designed to raise and coordinate donor funds in a new approach designed to make a major impact on the global epidemics of HIV, TB and Malaria.

World Bank Projects: Major loans to developing countries for HIV prevention and treatment activities

UNAIDS: Coordinating Secretariat for the UN agencies undertaking activities designed to raise awareness and reduce vulnerability, new infections and the morbidity/mortality as a result of HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS also coordinates these activities at country level

Others: The presentation will discuss progress towards these various goals and commitments.