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Secretary Clinton Pledges Support for New Push Against HIV/AIDS Endorses Test & Treat Strategy for 'AIDS-Free Generation'

DENVER – Test & Treat to End AIDS lauded Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's call for an "AIDS-free generation" through the use of test and treat and other strategies to defeat the epidemic.

For the past two years, TTEA has advocated immediate drug treatment for HIV-positive people and has urged the federal government to fund a larger study of the strategy to explore the operational questions that need to be addressed before it can be made international public health policy. Immediate treatment reduces the amount of virus a person carries to undetectable levels so the virus is not transmitted to others.

Now, Secretary Clinton has become an advocate for test and treat, calling on the world to help the United States achieve an AIDS-free generation through a combination of prevention efforts.

"Secretary Clinton's call to action is a historic moment in the fight against HIV/AIDS," says Victor Dukay, PhD, a senior partner in TTEA and president of the Lundy Foundation in Denver. "Like TTEA, Secretary Clinton sees that we finally have the tools to stop the spread of HIV. We now just need the political will."

In today's speech at the National Institutes of Health, Secretary Clinton cited three interventions as having especially important roles in driving down the worldwide rate of new infection to achieve the goal of an AIDS-free generation:

Treatment as prevention, or test and treat. Secretary Clinton noted that an NIH study earlier this year demonstrated that HIV-positive people taking antiretroviral drugs were 96 percent less likely to transmit the virus to a partner. Thus, expanding voluntary testing and providing drugs to people as soon as they know they are HIV-positive can greatly curb the spread of the virus.

Voluntary adult male circumcision. This low-cost procedure reduces the risk of female-to-male transmission by more than 60 percent.

Preventing mother-to-child transmission. The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) launched a global plan earlier this year to end new infections among newborns by 2015.

In addition to the \$50 million already granted recently to HIV/AIDS treatment as prevention research strategies, Secretary Clinton pledged another \$60 million from PEPFAR to scale up "combination prevention" efforts, including test and treat, in four African countries for a total of \$110 million. TTEA had estimated that a more thorough investigation of the test and treat strategy would cost \$120 million.

"We hope that the United States' commitment to test and treat will inspire other countries to follow suit," says Brian Williams, PhD, a senior partner in TTEA and a former epidemiologist with the World Health Organization based in Geneva, Switzerland. "An AIDS-free generation is a goal that no one country can accomplish alone."

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The United States has played a leadership role in the fight against HIV/AIDS from the beginning, funding research into HIV drugs and helping develop prevention and treatment efforts around the world. Its partners have included other governments, multilateral institutions, the private sector and civil society groups including faith-based groups. Such cooperation must be continued and expanded to ultimately stop HIV/AIDS.

“It’s clear that we now have the scientific knowledge to defeat HIV/AIDS. We must match that with political will and public support,” says Matthew Oresman, an attorney for Patton Boggs LLP, the Washington, D.C., law firm that has provided pro bono assistance to TTEA and the Lundy Foundation in their advocacy efforts.

Dukay will be interviewed about TTEA and Secretary Clinton’s combination prevention plan on Colorado Public Radio’s Colorado Matters program Monday, November 28, 2011. The show is broadcast at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. at 90.1 FM, or can be heard thereafter on the CPR website, www.cpr.org.

For more about Secretary Clinton’s call to action, a transcript of her NIH speech is available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/11/176810.htm> and a video recording is at <http://videocast.nih.gov/Summary.asp?File=16952>.

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About Test & Treat to End AIDS: TTEA is an international effort that seeks funding for an aggressive approach to end the HIV/AIDS pandemic. For more information, visit www.ttea.info

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