



EACS Newsletter - World AIDS Day 2019

Message from the President and President-elect



1 December 2019

The robust “toolkit” for preventing HIV, including the notion of undetectable = untransmittable (U=U) and use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) should theoretically be enough to end the HIV epidemic. And indeed many inspiring and encouraging examples of good HIV prevention and care projects and models exist globally. However, although HIV-related infections have been reduced by 47% worldwide between 1996 and 2017, there is a continuous increase of HIV infections in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. This region has the fastest growing HIV epidemic in the world. The annual number of new HIV infections is 29% higher than in 2010. The vast majority of people acquiring HIV live in the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Together, these countries account for most of all the new infections in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Therefore, there is a real need to share successful models of care and to help improve HIV management on all levels throughout Europe. EACS is very happy to help develop and shape a European standard of care based on our annually updated HIV guidelines. In addition, we are offering support for short- and long-term medical exchange programmes as well as working on developing an HIV diploma for Europe. We strongly believe that providing medical education, working together and combating stigma around HIV is the way forward to help end this epidemic and allow access to standardised high-quality treatment and care for all living with HIV in our region. We want to recognize and appreciate the essential role that communities have played and continue to play in the AIDS response at the international, national and local level. This is a crucial response in the fight against HIV. We are happy to be on your side!

But 2019 has also been an exciting year with regard to new developments in HIV science. Hopes for a HIV cure have risen in light of this year’s success with the “London and Düsseldorf patients” who are in HIV remission without any antiretroviral medication after having received stem cells from donors with rare genetic mutations of the CCR5 gene, making them HIV-resistant. Even if these are only additional cases, they show that the cure achieved by Timothy Brown 10 years ago can be replicated in other patients. Clearly these findings will help to develop and shape the future HIV cure agenda.

Finally, more and more countries are implementing PrEP. A decline of between 20-25% of new incident HIV infections have been reported from Paris and London, particularly in men who have sex with men using PrEP. Germany is now reimbursing PrEP through general health insurance since the first of September 2019, in those at high risk for HIV acquisition. Hopefully, more countries will join and make PrEP freely available throughout the whole of Europe.

Clearly, 2019 has been a year with many advances in HIV prevention and care but we all need to maintain supporting people living with HIV and remember

those who have died. We still have a long way to go. So please, don't forget "Every Action Counts". Please help to make a difference and remain active members of our EACS society.

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