

Gilead is helping Africa lead the world in combating AIDS

By ACSH Staff — July 23, 2015



#EndAIDS

When you think of various countries around the globe, it is

unlikely that Botswana pops into your head. Yet, some very important news just came from this impoverished sub-Saharan country.

A new [study](#) [1] about the use of antiretroviral drugs that prevent the transmission of HIV in serodiscordant couples (almost always from an infected man to an uninfected woman) is about as good as it gets. When used properly, Truvada-- the most commonly used anti-HIV combination therapy-- provides 100 percent protection from HIV transmission in these couples. Pretty amazing, and also further evidence that AIDS could eventually become a nightmare from the past.

The study, a year-long trial which included 229 patients who were treated with Truvada, revealed that there were *zero* instances of transmission of the virus from the HIV-positive person to their partners. Pretty amazing. The results again demonstrate that Truvada can be used successfully as a prophylactic agent something that was unimaginable even a decade ago.

Recently, we [reported](#) [2] on another study, in which Cuba became the first country in the world to wipe out the transmission of the virus from infected mothers to their fetuses. This is also an extraordinary example of the power of HIV prophylaxis. .

And, back in 2011, Dr. Josh Bloom, the director of chemical and pharmaceutical sciences at the American Council on Science and Health, wrote a rather prescient [piece](#) [3] in *Medical Progress Today*, where he noted that pharmaceutical tools were available to at least begin the process of stopping the global AIDS epidemic. That study included 1,700 heterosexual couples at 13 sites on four continents. The results were groundbreaking: patients taking antiretroviral drugs at an early stage of infection had a 96 percent reduced risk of transmitting the virus to their partners.

In this piece, Dr. Bloom said, With sufficient commitment [the availability of drugs and patient compliance], May 2011 will indeed be remembered as an extraordinary month the time when we witnessed the beginning of the end of the global AIDS epidemic.

Finally, we would be remiss in our duties if we did not point out a bit of irony that is rather obvious. Truvada was developed by Gilead, which is arguably the biggest name in the AIDS field. If the

name sounds familiar, it is because Gilead has been in the news lately, but for an entirely different reason. The company is also a pioneer in the fight to cure hepatitis C (HCV) a serious and progressive viral infection of the liver. Before these new drugs, no satisfactory therapy was available. The company's drugs Sovaldi and Harvoni do just that for almost 100 percent of people who are infected with HCV.

Dr. Bloom comments, If you think about it, what Gilead has done is nothing short of amazing. The company has managed to develop drugs that are highly effective against HIV *and* HCV two of the most important viral infections in the world. Yet, Gilead is routinely the object of scorn by critics who relentlessly attack them for the high prices of their HCV drugs. If people could set aside their prejudices against pharmaceutical companies for a moment and take a look at what the company has really accomplished, they might view things a little differently.

And, since no good deed goes unpunished, Sovaldi and Harvoni are so effective that Senator Bernie Sanders (I, VT) has proposed that the veterans administration invalidate Gilead's patent on Sovaldi, so that veterans can gain access to this miraculous drug.

Dr. Bloom recently discussed this terrible idea in his [Science 2.0 article](#) ^[4] entitled Bernie Sanders Vs. Gilead And The Constitution.

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