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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NZAF welcomes Medsafe's milestone decision to approve Truvada for Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)

The approval means PrEP is one step closer to becoming available to those who need it in New Zealand.

Truvada is already available as a treatment for people living with HIV, but registration for a preventive purpose could make an enormous difference to the community. The use of the HIV treatment drug, Truvada, to prevent HIV is called HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

In registering Truvada for PrEP, Medsafe has confirmed that this is a safe and effective way of preventing HIV transmission through sex. Truvada is a daily pill taken by people who don't have HIV, but who are at high risk. Truvada has already been approved for HIV prevention in a number of countries.

PrEP provides a new way of staying safe that can help us end new transmissions of HIV in New Zealand. We know condoms work. Now we also have a pill that works. PrEP can transform the lives of those at risk of HIV who struggle with condom-use.

Medsafe's approval is a positive step, and comes just before the launch of the of NZPrEP study which will make PrEP freely available to 150 gay and bisexual men in Auckland at highest risk of HIV. One of the objectives of this pilot study is to demonstrate PrEP acceptability and implementation in New Zealand to support the case for funding from PHARMAC.

The cost of filling a Truvada prescription without PHARMAC funding is prohibitive for those not included in the study. The registration of Truvada as PrEP is a step in the right direction, but now PHARMAC and the drug manufacturer Gilead Sciences need to agree on terms for public funding.

"Without PHARMAC funding, it will be difficult to maximise the potential benefit of PrEP. We call on both PHARMAC and Gilead Sciences, to agree on terms for public funding so that this ground-breaking tool is affordable for New Zealanders at highest risk of HIV. Making this tool available would be a giant leap forward towards our ambitious goal of ending new HIV transmissions in New Zealand by 2025," says Jason Myers, Executive Director, New Zealand AIDS Foundation (NZAF).

NZAF will continue working with both Gilead Sciences and PHARMAC, encouraging them to act in the best interests of those at highest risk of HIV by making PrEP available and affordable to those who need it.

NOTE TO EDITORS: Currently, around 3200 people in New Zealand are estimated to be living with HIV. Gay and bisexual men remain the population group most at risk. Of the 224 diagnoses in 2015, 153 were amongst gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. Of the 109 people infected with HIV *in New Zealand* in 2015, 88, or 81%, were gay and bisexual men.

For further comment please contact:

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