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HIV prevention: Primary Prevention more important now than ever before

The role of primary prevention cannot be understated when it comes to halting new HIV transmissions in New Zealand.

The country is seeing a resurgent HIV epidemic, with annual HIV diagnoses the highest they have ever been. At such a time, it is important to reaffirm the role of prevention tools; those that have worked well so far, and to integrate new bio medical options into the equation.

The New Zealand AIDS foundation is launching a bold new campaign – ‘I’m On’ – as its response to the growth of new HIV infections. The campaign targets gay and bi men, those most at risk of HIV in New Zealand. It reinforces the importance of condoms and also provides the community with information about Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP).

Jason Myers, Executive Director, New Zealand AIDS Foundation, says, “Condoms have worked incredibly well in New Zealand and have played a major role in keeping HIV prevalence low by world standards. They remain a crucial component of the strategy to eliminate new HIV transmissions. We need this message to remain loud and clear and at the same time we need to educate people about PrEP as an option. PrEP is an option for those who struggle with consistently using condoms for casual sex and are therefore at very high risk of HIV.”

The “I’m On” campaign comes under the umbrella of ‘Ending HIV’, the New Zealand AIDS Foundation’s flagship programme. The campaign draws strongly on the award winning campaign of the same name, developed by the AIDS Council of New South Wales (ACON). Ending HIV has set a bold goal for New Zealand of zero new HIV transmissions by 2025 in New Zealand.

In 2015, 224 people were diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand, with 109 of those having been infected in New Zealand. Currently, around 3200 people in New Zealand are estimated to be living with HIV.

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