



MEDIA RELEASE: 27 NOVEMBER 2017
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Huge breakthroughs could spell the end for HIV in New Zealand

This World AIDS Day, New Zealanders have two reasons to celebrate – a massive scientific discovery and the proposed funding of a revolutionary HIV prevention pill.

Since 1988, the world has come together on 1 December to unite in the fight against HIV, show support for people living with HIV, and to commemorate those who have died from AIDS-related illnesses. New Zealanders can donate this World AIDS Day by texting “RED” to 849 to instantly donate \$3, or contribute online at www.wad.org.nz

This year, there are two special reasons to celebrate.

First, latest scientific evidence has concluded that people living with HIV who are successfully treated can no longer pass HIV on to their sexual partners. This is a game changer for HIV prevention. More importantly, this news should be a clarion call to rally against the stigma and discrimination experienced on a daily basis by people living with HIV.

The recent ‘*Opposites Attract*’ study analysed results of gay and bisexual men living in relationships where one partner is HIV positive and the other is HIV negative. There was not a single HIV transmission in over 17,000 acts of sex without condoms between HIV positive men with an undetectable HIV viral load and their HIV negative partners. These results support those of previous studies with similar findings and have organisations such as UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation supporting the notion that ‘Undetectable equals Untransmittable’ – also known as ‘U=U’.

Second, in a milestone announcement this month, PHARMAC has proposed to fund PrEP, the revolutionary daily pill that an HIV negative person can take to protect themselves from HIV. In announcing the proposal, PHARMAC has said that the use of PrEP by people at high risk of HIV has been associated with major reductions in HIV infections in overseas settings, and this is what would be expected for New Zealand.

“Both these pieces of news are game-changers for HIV prevention. We must use these tools to not only end transmissions of HIV, but to get people talking about HIV again and break down the myths that are still out there,” says NZAF Executive Director Dr Jason Myers.

“HIV stigma and discrimination remain very real for people living with HIV in New Zealand and the success of HIV treatment in reducing infectiousness, as well as the uptake of PrEP, provides a direct challenge to this.”

Volunteers will be on the street in a town near you on World AIDS Day, so please give generously to support the work of HIV organisations this December 1st. All profits from the street collection will be divided evenly between the New Zealand AIDS Foundation and the Wellness Fund, which offers financial assistance to people living with HIV in New Zealand.

You can also text message “RED” to 849 to instantly donate \$3 dollars, or contribute online at www.WAD.org.nz

FAQs: World AIDS Day 2017

What else is happening this World AIDS Day?

- **The World AIDS Day Street appeal** is taking place on Thursday 30th November and Friday 1st December in major centres across the country — Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch. People can register their interest to volunteer at <https://www.nzaf.org.nz/participate/volunteer/>
- Workplaces, community groups, families and friends are taking part in the **World AIDS Day Bake Off**, challenging each other to produce the best home baking and raising money to end HIV transmission and stigma in NZ. Certain Bake Offs will be judged by celebrity judges Suzanne Paul and Auckland drag royalty Miss Ribena. Watch a side-splitting introductory video and register at <https://www.everydayhero.co.nz/event/WorldAIDS BakeOffDay2017>
- This year, World AIDS Day is part of **HIV Awareness Week, also known as Puāwai Festival**. Running from November 27th to December 2nd, Puāwai is a series of events aiming to help change attitudes and end the stigma surrounding HIV. As part of the festival, **NZAF is organising a Red Party at Family Bar** in Auckland on Dec 1st. See www.WAD.org.nz for more information.
BRIEFS: Close Encounters has joined the Puāwai Festival to honour World AIDS Day. For every ticket purchased for the December 1st show, \$2.50 will be donated to NZAF. Join the Briefs boys for an out-of-this-world night of interstellar aerials, galactic glamour and astro-athleticism while supporting a good cause. <http://www.qtheatre.co.nz/news/briefs-x-puawai-festival>
- **A World AIDS Day After Party** will take place at Ivy Bar in Wellington on December 1st, <https://www.facebook.com/events/140602823262258/> - and another in Christchurch: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1846862035625008/>

- Christchurch's Big Gay Bingo is back by popular demand, raising funds to support those living with and affected by HIV:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1778803259079463/>
- 80s musical extravaganza **Pleasuredome has an in-house Pride Parade** on December 2nd to support World AIDS Day. Cast members will be out on the New York street collecting money to support the cause, and all transaction fees from tickets sold on the night will also be donated to NZAF. See
<http://www.pleasuredomethemusical.com>

What are [HIV](#) and [AIDS](#)?

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It's a virus that's passed from person to person through the bloodstream. Once HIV is in the bloodstream, it begins to attack a person's immune system and works to kill off healthy immune system cells.

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and is an advanced form of HIV. Most people in New Zealand who have HIV don't develop AIDS, largely thanks to advances in medications.

AIDS can develop when HIV weakens a person's immune system so their body is no longer able to protect itself against infections and diseases that a normal immune system would fight off.

According to classification by U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a CD4 count of 200 would be classified as AIDS diagnosis.

There are currently 3,500 people living with HIV in the country and gay and bisexual men are disproportionately affected by the epidemic.

Use #WorldAIDSDay #WAD2017 #EndingHIVNZ #UequalsU

For further comment please contact:

Anthony Walton

World AIDS Day Media Co-ordinator

New Zealand AIDS Foundation | Te Tūāpapa Mate Āraikore o Aotearoa
p | +64 9 306 3421 m | +64 21 792 603 e | anthony.walton@nzaf.org.nz