Initiation of Antiretroviral Treatment Protects Uninfected Sexual Partners from HIV Infection (HPTN Study 052)

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WASHINGTON, May 12, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Men and women infected with HIV reduced the risk of transmitting the virus to their sexual partners through initiation of oral antiretroviral therapy (ART), according to findings from a large multinational clinical study conducted by the HIV Prevention Trials Network (HPTN), a global partnership dedicated to reducing the transmission of HIV through cutting-edge biomedical, behavioral, and structural interventions.

The study, known as HPTN 052, was designed to evaluate whether immediate versus delayed use of ART by HIV-infected individuals would reduce transmission of HIV to their HIV-uninfected partners and potentially benefit the HIV-infected individual as well. Findings from the study were reviewed by an independent Data and Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB).The DSMB recommended that the results be released as soon as possible and that the findings be shared with study participants and investigators. The DSMB concluded that initiation of ART by HIV-infected individuals substantially protected their HIV-uninfected sexual partners from acquiring HIV infection, with a 96 percent reduction in risk of HIV transmission. HPTN 052 is the first randomized clinical trial to show that treating an HIV-infected individual with ART can reduce the risk of sexual transmission of HIV to an uninfected partner.

"This is excellent news," said Dr. Myron Cohen, HPTN 052 Principal Investigator and Associate Vice Chancellor for Global Health and Director of the Institute of Global Health and Infectious Diseases at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "The study was designed to evaluate the benefit to the sexual partner as well as the benefit to the HIV-infected person. This is the first randomized clinical trial to definitively indicate that an HIV-infected individual can reduce sexual transmission of HIV to an uninfected partner by beginning antiretroviral therapy sooner. HPTN recognizes the significant contr
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