

December 1, 2010

Dear OHTN Partners,

December 1st is World AIDS Day – a day to reflect on the impact HIV/AIDS has had at home and around the world, to honour and remember those who have died, and to focus on the work still to be done.

Although great strides have been made in curbing the epidemic in Canada, an estimated 65,000 Canadians are living with HIV and as many as 26% are unaware of their status. More than 27,000 of these Canadians live in Ontario. Marginalized communities, particularly Aboriginal peoples and people from countries where HIV is endemic, continue to bear a disproportionate burden of infections. Men who have sex with men are still the group most affected by this disease.

On World AIDS Day 2010, we at the OHTN would like to mark some recent progress in developing the knowledge to improve HIV prevention, treatment, care and support:

- We now know more about the virus and its impact on individuals and communities, and how to detect HIV-related co-morbidities, such as lipodistrophy, anal cancer, influenza and herpes simplex virus.
- The [OHTN Cohort Study](#) has developed data-sharing partnerships with other cohorts such as the [North American AIDS Cohort Collaboration on Research and Design \(NA-ACCORD\)](#), the [Institute for Clinical and Evaluative Sciences](#) and the [Canadian Observational Cohort Collaboration \(CANOC\)](#). Because of these collaborations, we now know the [most effective time to begin antiretroviral therapy](#)– a finding that is changing HIV treatment practices around the world.
- Research funded and conducted by the OHTN is also having an impact on policy. Findings from the [Positive Spaces Healthy Places](#) study have been used to make the case for more supportive housing for people with HIV in Ontario, and the OHTN-funded report, [HIV Non-Disclosure and the Criminal Law: Establishing Policy Options for Ontario](#), was cited in a recent Manitoba Court of Appeals Decision to help frame the concept of ‘significant risk’ for HIV transmission.
- The OHTN, in partnership with the AIDS Bureau, has developed the Evidence Based Practice Unit, which helps AIDS service organizations across the province enhance their capacity to [evaluate their programs](#), [assess the utilization and impact of their services](#), and develop more effective interventions.
- Our [Rapid Response Service](#) completed 23 reviews in the last year on topics such as the [sexual health of transgender men](#), [cost effectiveness of pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis](#) and [efficacy of female condoms](#). These rapid syntheses of current research help community agencies and policy makers make evidence-informed decision.

- To honour all those who have contributed to the fight against HIV in Ontario, the OHTN and the AIDS Bureau are sponsoring *Project Remember*, an interactive, community-driven e-calendar that will document the people, events and history of the epidemic in Ontario.

While we celebrate these accomplishments, our work is far from done. The theme of this year's [World AIDS Day](#) is *Universal Access and Human Rights*. The OHTN is committed to conducting and funding rigorous, relevant research that will improve access to treatment for people with or at risk of HIV. We thank all our partners for being part of these efforts and look forward to working closely with you to implement our new [Strategic Plan](#) and make a difference in the lives of people with and at risk of HIV.

Best Regards,



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