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Gaps in HIV epidemic, prevention and control: The role of academic centers

AIDS remains a public health and social problems threatening global population. There are approximately 36.7 million people currently living with HIV and tens of millions of people have died of AIDS-related complications since the beginning of the epidemic. The greatest prevalence and incidence remains in Eastern and southern Africa with 19 million (52%) affected. While new cases have been reported in all regions of the world, approximately two-thirds are in sub-Saharan Africa, with 46% of new cases in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The number of people newly infected with HIV, especially children, and the number of AIDS-related deaths have declined over the years. The number of people with HIV receiving treatment increased to more than 18 million in 2016. However, gaps exist. While studies show declines in new infections among adults observed earlier in the epidemic, incidence is now rising in some areas of the world particularly in China and India. HIV epidemic has led to a resurgence of tuberculosis (TB), particularly in Africa. TB is a leading cause of death for people with HIV worldwide. In 2015, approximately 11% of new TB cases occurred in people living with HIV. From our experience of HIV preventive work in the Dominican Republic, effective prevention strategies include behavior change programs, condom use, HIV testing, blood supply safety, harm reduction efforts for injecting drug users, and male circumcision (WHO and CDC recommendations). Additionally, recent research has shown that providing HIV treatment to people with HIV significantly reduces the risk of transmission to their HIV-negative partners. Pre-exposure antiretroviral prophylaxis (PrEP) has also been shown to be an effective HIV prevention strategy in individuals at high risk for HIV infection.

On World AIDS Day 2014, UNAIDS set targets for 2020 aimed at ending the epidemic by 2030. These goals and targets were reiterated in UNAIDS' 2016-2021 strategy, which also aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The U.N.

charter members pledged committed to ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. To reach this target within the SDGs is the central challenge facing the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Ending AIDS which was held from 8 to 10 June 2016. In the United States, new HIV infections are becoming rare. When they do occur, every person, regardless of age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socio-economic circumstance, will have access to quality, life-extending care, free from stigma and discrimination. The Dublin Declaration on Partnership to Fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia has dramatically impacted the regional response to the epidemic. The collaboration between government and civil society has proven to be essential element of sustainable response to HIV epidemic, monitoring, prevention and control (European Center for Disease Prevention and Control, Dublin Declaration Monitoring – 2016 progress).

In conclusion, while numerous socioeconomic and policy making factors play crucial role in understanding HIV epidemic, prevention and control, the key stakeholders are encouraged to work together as a team. Community-academic partnerships will gain increasing prominence in solving HIV-related matters

Speaker Biography

Dr. Reza Nassiri is a Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, Professor of Family and Community Medicine, and lecturer in Global Health, Infectious Diseases and Tropical Medicine at Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine. His research interests focuses on Clinical Pharmacology of HIV/AIDS & TB, prevention and control of infectious diseases, neglected tropical diseases, community health, global health, and socio-ethical determinants of health. Prof. Nassiri works on international public health issues and has expertise in global health education, research, policy and governance. He has made contributions in various fields of medical sciences including clinical investigation and health education. One the basis of his extensive experience and expertise in HIV/AIDS and TB, he developed Clinical Research Programs in Brazil, South Africa, Haiti, Dominican Republic and Mexico. The core foci of such programs are socio-cultural, bio-ethical determinant of HIV/AIDS and TB prevention, control and intervention.

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