



William

U=U: The problem solver

People who take HIV medication every day as prescribed suppress the virus successfully and can no longer pass on the virus to their partners, can have healthy children and have the same life expectancy as people without HIV.

We have been blindfolded and we have been living in fear for the past 30 years. But now we have hope. Now we have a new message to tell. We are glad that the U=U message has made us see what has kept us back for decades. U=U in full is Undetectable = Untransmittable, and it means that when an HIV positive person starts treatment and becomes undetectable or virally suppressed and maintains the state of being undetectable they will never transmit HIV sexually to their HIV negative partner(s). Virally suppressed means a viral load of less than 200 copies/ml, being undetectable means having a viral load of less than 50 copies/ml. Both means you cannot pass it on.

I got to learn about this life-saving message in 2017 via social media platforms. Having learned about it, it motivated me to do more research on it because I couldn't believe it at first. I had never heard about this message anywhere here in Uganda.

Withholding vital information from the general public is commonly seen in Africa and at Love To Love organization we call this as HIV colonialism. When people think us Africans are not competent enough to take responsibility for our own health. Since the day we endorsed the U=U message at Love To Love organization we have gotten a lot of challenges while preaching the Gospel of U=U here in Uganda.

Most people think that the message that we are delivering belongs exclusively to the LGBTQI+-community, which is not true and very wrong. U=U is for all. Another one is that we are de-campaigning the use of condoms and other false accusations. We still promote condom use, but also include

HIV

HIV is a virus that can only survive in the human body. The virus can not be passed on through hugging or kissing, sharing the same toilet, mosquito bites, small wounds. When untreated, HIV is found in blood, sperm, vaginal fluid and breast milk. Taking HIV-medication daily as prescribed, successfully suppresses the virus. Medication has to be continued to maintain the viral load suppressed. If the viral load is suppressed, there is zero risk of sexual transmission of HIV.

the U=U-message. However this has not stopped us from doing what we believe is right. The main agenda for the U=U message is to promote HIV testing, advocate for treatment access for all, promote equality, dismantle HIV stigma at all levels, treatment literacy, and routine viral load testing. Every year about 50.000 people get infected in Uganda. Is it because we don't have enough prevention measures? If we do have them why are the new HIV infections escalating day by day? For us at Love To Love Organization, we do believe that other prevention measures have played a good role but still, we realized that all these prevention tools which are in place, U=U is the foundation to be able to end the epidemic.

Because once we encourage people to know their status, this will give room to all people. A room where they know how they stand, take responsibility and stay healthy. Those newly tested positive start treatments immediately and stay in care and those who stopped treatment because of stigma and other related challenges should be brought back to care. This will help to reduce the rising number of new infections or even putting them at a halt. U=U helps us stop this epidemic, let's spread the message, not the virus!

Hiv Vereniging

The Dutch Association of People Living with HIV (Hiv Vereniging) represents the interests of all people with HIV in the Netherlands, irrespective of background.

We provide information about living with HIV and organise all kinds of meet-ups.

Servicepunt

Our team of expert volunteers can be contacted for any question about living with HIV, by telephone on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 14:00 - 22:00 hrs, or by email: servicepunt@hivvereniging.nl.

See www.hivvereniging.nl