The PARTNER Study – the largest study showing that HIV antiretroviral treatment (ART) effectively prevents HIV transmission in gay men is published today in The Lancet.

The final results of the PARTNER study are now published in the leading medical journal The Lancet*. The study reports zero HIV transmissions over eight years in gay men not using condoms, finally confirming that an undetectable viral load on HIV treatment renders an individual sexually non-infectious.

Almost 1,000 gay male couples contributed to the PARTNER2 study. One partner was HIV negative and the other was HIV positive and on effective HIV treatment with viral load less than 200 copies/mL.

With up to eight years follow up and approximately 77,000 times that couples had sex without using condoms, the PARTNER2 study reported that there were no HIV transmissions within the couples in the study. The results showed that ART is just as effective for gay couples as an earlier phase of the study proved it was for heterosexual couples. This is important because without a positive partner being on treatment, anal sex is at higher risk for HIV transmission compared to vaginal sex.

Professor Alison Rodger from University College London, and lead author on the PARTNER study explains the study*: "PARTNER2 data provides robust evidence for gay men that the risk of HIV transmission with suppressive ART is zero".*

The results support the international U=U campaign to highlight and campaign for greater awareness of how effective ART can help people have sex without any fear of passing HIV on. In 2016, partly because of the results of the PARTNER1 study, the Prevention Access Campaign launched the U=U (undetectable equals untransmittable) campaign. This campaign is based on the statement that a person living with HIV who has undetectable viral load does not transmit HIV to their partners and is supported by leading HIV medical organisations and more than 850 HIV community organisations in almost 100 countries.

Bruce Richman, founding executive director of Prevention Access Campaign, said, *"We're tremendously grateful to the groundbreaking PARTNER2 researchers and participants for the unequivocal final chapter confirming U=U. PARTNER2 has forever changed what it means to live and love for people with HIV around the world*."

Simon Collins, an HIV positive treatment activist at HIV i-Base, London said, "*PARTNER2 has met the community demand from gay men to have accurate data about our health. There is no evidence that HIV transmission can actually occur when viral load is undetectable. Our data support the international U=U awareness campaign.*"

Dr. Michael Brady, Medical Director at Terrence Higgins Trust, said, *"It is impossible to overstate the importance of these findings. The PARTNER study has given us the confidence to say, without doubt, that people living with HIV who are on effective treatment cannot pass the virus on to their sexual partners. This*

has incredible impact on the lives of people living with HIV and is a powerful message to address HIV-related stigma."

The final publication of the results, which were first presented at the AIDS2018 conference in Amsterdam in July 2018, finally provides and acknowledges the scientific evidence for how effectively HIV treatment prevents sexual transmission. The results are important to support improving the quality of life for HIV positive people and their partners globally.

**The Lancet is a weekly peer-reviewed general medical journal. It is among the world's oldest, most prestigious, and best known general medical journals, with an impact factor of 53.254 (www.thelancet.com).*

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About the PARTNER study

The PARTNER study was an observational study focusing on the risk of sexual HIV transmission when an HIV positive person is on treatment in two phases from 2010-2018. PARTNER1 recruited and followed up both heterosexual and gay serodifferent couples from 2010 to 2014, and the findings were reported in JAMA in 2016. However, because of the lower number of couple-years of follow-up accumulated for gay couples, the results were less precise for gay men at the end of PARTNER1 compared to heterosexual couples. The aim of the second phase of the PARTNER study (PARTNER2) was to produce a similar level of evidence for transmission risk through condomless anal sex between men with suppressive ART to that generated for heterosexual couples in PARTNER1.

The PARTNER2 study has been following almost 1,000 gay male serodifferent couples from 14 different countries in Europe, where one partner was HIV-positive and on suppressive ART, and the other partner was HIV-negative. The study followed couples from September 2010 to April 2018, over which time couples reported almost 77,000 episodes of condomless anal sex with no linked HIV transmission occurring.

The second phase enrolled gay male couples in which one partner was HIV positive and the other was HIV negative. It only enrolled couples that had already chosen not to use condoms on a regular basis when they entered the study.

To be eligible for PARTNER2, the HIV positive person needed to be on HIV treatment (ART) at the time of enrolment. Participants also completed questionnaires every six months describing how often they had sex. Clinical data with HIV viral load monitoring of the HIV positive partner and HIV testing of the negative partner was also carried out every six to 12 months.

The PARTNER study was set up to address a question of great relevance in the daily life of people living with HIV and was conducted in collaboration with representatives of HIV organisations in an effort to make the study as close as possible to participants and to the larger community of people living with HIV.

The second phase of PARTNER was funded by the National Institute of Health Research UK. Other funding was obtained from ViiV Healthcare, Gilead Sciences, Augustinus Fonden and A.P. Møller Fonden. The study is coordinated cooperatively between CHIP, Rigshospitalet, University of Copenhagen, and University College London.