

Vaccine essential to conclusively end AIDS in countries like India

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Focused on the low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) across Africa and Asia that are home to the vast majority of the world's people living with HIV/AIDS, the study published in PLOS ONE shows that adding a vaccine could dramatically reduce new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths even if other treatment and prevention tools are extensively scaled up.

The analysis in the study shows that a 70-percent-effective AIDS vaccine with a strong uptake could reduce new annual HIV infections in LMICs by 44 percent in its first 10 years and 65 percent in 25 years, ultimately averting tens of millions of infections and saving millions of lives.

It also demonstrates that an AIDS vaccine would be impactful and cost-effective across a wide range of product characteristics. Higher efficacy, longer-lasting protection, fewer doses, lower vaccine costs and a more effective rollout will increase both health impact and cost-effectiveness.

"This study reaffirms how a safe vaccine could be instrumental in reducing the number of new infections and save millions of lives. This would significantly reduce the treatment costs and even reduce total response costs over time", said Dr Rajat Goyal, India country director at International AIDS Vaccine Initiative. He continues, "It is clear that we must continue to expedite development of an effective HIV vaccine alongside critical efforts to accelerate and sustain broad and equitable access to effective antiretroviral therapy and new approaches for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)."

According to the latest information from the National Aids Control Organisation (NACO), India has around 21.17 lakh people living with HIV/AIDS, the third highest number of in the world. Out of this 40.5% percent of total HIV infections are among women.

"Adding a vaccine to a comprehensive HIV/AIDS response will hasten the end of the global epidemic and ensure that it won't rebound," said Mitchell Warren, executive director, AVAC. "A safe, effective and affordable AIDS vaccine is an essential complement to the existing treatment and prevention options, and this study highlights why accelerated investments are needed for both implementation of what we have and the development of what we still need."

This new study builds on the UNAIDS Investment Framework Enhanced, which articulates how accelerated scale-up of existing HIV/AIDS interventions and the addition of new prevention options could significantly change the trajectory of the global epidemic. It adds extensive analysis on the impact of key characteristics of a vaccine (efficacy, duration of protection, number of doses) and of vaccination programmes (how many people would be covered with how many visits, cost per regimen, etc.).

The study was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which administers the U.S. foreign assistance program providing economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 120 countries worldwide.