

Combined prevention IN HIV/AIDS: New possibilities



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Combination Prevention is a set of strategies that uses different forms of approaches to respond to the prevention of HIV and other STIs. These strategies can be applied in ways that reach multiple audiences and across relationships. The best-known prevention method in Brazil is the condom (male and female), but there are several other possibilities available in the Public Healthcare network, considered complementary tools in the fight against the HIV epidemic. These tools are described in the “Prevention Mandala”, highlighting the use of Treatment as Prevention (TasP), Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). Treatment as prevention (TasP) is very effective when there is adherence to antiretroviral treatment, making people living with HIV (PLHIV) achieve viral suppression, that is, the so-called “undetectable viral load” (I=I). Scientific evidence shows that PLHIV who have an undetectable viral load do not transmit the HIV virus through sexual intercourse when having intercourse without a condom. PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) is the use of antiretroviral (ARV) medication after any situation in which there is possible exposure to HIV. The medication works by preventing the virus from establishing itself in the body, which is why it is important to start this prophylaxis within a period of up to 72 hours, and must be strictly followed for 28 days. PrEP is the use of antiretroviral (ARV) medication by people who are not living with HIV, but who are more likely to be exposed (key or priority populations).

With the drug already circulating in the blood at the time of contact with the virus, HIV cannot establish itself in the body. Evidence proves that PrEP is an effective strategy, with more than 90% reduction in HIV transmission. Other forms of prevention described in the prevention mandala are: testing for HIV and other STIs (with early diagnosis through

exams, treatment begins, thus interrupting the chain of transmission), complete vaccination, availability of condoms and lubricant gel, access to a harm reduction program for the most vulnerable populations. All the prevention supplies described are offered by the Unified Health System, free of charge.

Figure 1: Combined Prevention Mandala.

