

BE THE GENERATION

TO END THE AIDS EPIDEMIC

BTG News

2020 Edition, Issue 4

From the Editor

World AIDS Day looks a little different this year. Last year, I was on an airplane. Remember airplanes? I was flying from Seattle to an HIV conference in Houston, TX. No, not over Zoom—a real, in-person conference! I probably got 100 hugs over the course of the day-and-a-half meeting. Real hugs from true friends and colleagues in the movement to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Had I known what was coming in 2020, I would have held each hug a little longer.

While we cannot be together in person for World AIDS Day this year, we must not despair. As a movement, we have been through so much together. We are stronger than everything this year has thrown at us! In fact, as you'll read in this final 2020 issue of *BTG News*, we've actually made a lot of progress in HIV prevention research this year. So stay positive, wash your hands, wear a mask, and go wild on your virtual World AIDS Day meetings! Help is on the way; we just have to adhere to our public health guidelines until it arrives. This year's World AIDS Day theme is "Global solidarity, shared responsibility." Though we're apart, we're apart together, and we each have to do our part to protect ourselves and our loved ones. Share our [resources](#) and [stay in touch](#). Working together, we *will* be the generation to end these epidemics. Hugs!

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The Legacy Project

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Women are expanding their options for HIV prevention! Researchers from the HPTN have made a major discovery: an injectable form of PrEP is highly safe and effective at preventing HIV for cisgender women. The study is called The LIFE Study, also known as [HPTN 084](#), and it was testing an injection of a drug called *cabotegravir* given once every eight weeks to see how safe and effective it is compared to oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention. A previous study called [HPTN 083](#) had already found this same injectable form of PrEP to be highly safe and effective for cisgender men and transgender women who have sex with men. The LIFE Study sought to find out if cisgender women can use it too. Injectable PrEP is not yet available to the general public because it still has to go through the approval process (such as the FDA process in the US), but now we have the research data to provide the regulatory authorities so that they can begin their process. Cis and trans women as well as cis men who have sex with men are one step closer to yet another option for HIV prevention!

The LIFE Study was originally designed to continue through year 2022, but the independent Data and Safety Monitoring Board that was closely analyzing the study data acknowledged that the study had reached its conclusion early, so they could release the results of the study early too. Click [here](#) to view the press release. Click [here](#) to view the HPTN 084 FAQ.



HPTN 084 study logo



HIV VACCINE
TRIALS NETWORK

HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN)

Calling all Black and Latinx medical students! The HVTN RAMP Scholars Program has released its latest request for applications, which are due January 4, 2021. This program is focused on African American/Black and Latinx medical students interested in HIV vaccine research. The HIV Vaccine Trials Network, in collaboration with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases of the National Institutes of Health, is investing in a young generation of HIV prevention researchers by providing Black and Latinx medical students with opportunities to conduct independent research while receiving mentoring, project and salary funding, training, and professional development opportunities. The complete Request for Applications can be found at <http://www.hvtn.org/ramp>.



Microbicide Trials Network (MTN)

In the [last issue of BTG news](#), we shared the very exciting announcement that cisgender women are closer than ever to being able to use a vaginal ring for HIV prevention. As a follow-up to this announcement, MTN was featured on AVAC's podcast, *Px Pulse*. The episode, [A leap forward for the dapivirine vaginal ring, the next steps are critical](#), includes five different perspectives on the ring, as well as those of Sharon Hillier, MTN's Principal Investigator. The presenters focus on how the ring will expand HIV prevention options for cisgender women, and the most important next steps to bringing the ring to those who need it.

In other ring news, MTN is excited to announce the launch of the [B-PROTECTED](#) study (MTN-043). The final study to be initiated by MTN as a NIAID-funded network, B-PROTECTED is enrolling cisgender women who are breastfeeding, as well as their babies, at trial sites in Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. A similar study involving cisgender women who are pregnant, called [DELIVER](#) (MTN-042), is ongoing. Both B-PROTECTED and DELIVER are open-label Phase IIIb studies designed to evaluate the safety of two HIV prevention methods – Truvada as oral PrEP and the monthly dapivirine vaginal ring. B-PROTECTED is enrolling up to 200 HIV-negative breastfeeding mothers and their 6- to 12-week-old babies. Participants are randomly assigned to use either the monthly dapivirine ring or Truvada. Participants will use their assigned product for three months and be

followed by the study team for an additional two weeks. Researchers will assess how much drug from Truvada and the dapivirine ring passes into breast milk and how much passes to the baby after breastfeeding, and will measure the effects, if any, this may have on the health and safety of both mother and child.



The B-PROTECTED study logo

MTN is also pleased to share that we have been granted a one-year extension from NIAID to continue operating as a network until November 30, 2021. In this last year of the network, MTN will continue our “A Look Back...” series, featuring stories about some of the incredible people and participants who have formed the heart of the MTN since 2006. The latest installments, [Life Changing Journeys in HIV Prevention](#) and [The Mighty Women of MU-JHU](#), as well as earlier pieces, can be accessed on the [MTN A Look Back...](#) page.



Imagery from the *A Look Back...* series

As 2020 comes to a close, MTN would like to express our most sincere gratitude to Jared Baeten, MTN's co-Principal Investigator, for his many contributions over the years, and wish him the best as he transitions to a new position with Gilead Sciences. Read [Saying Goodbye to Jared Baeten](#).



Dr. Jared Baeten



[Office of HIV/AIDS Network Coordination \(HANC\)](#)

HANC is pleased to share these webinar recordings, articles, videos, and other resources:

- [Be the Generation website](#): the best place to go for trustworthy information on biomedical HIV prevention research. Features sections on PrEP, U=U, Microbicides, HIV vaccine research, inspiring videos from researchers and community members, and even a quiz to test your knowledge of HIV prevention research.
- [COVID-19 Prevention Network](#): a website with comprehensive information about COVID-19 vaccine and antibody research including a registry for people interested in participating
- [COVID-19 Community Resources](#): In September, HANC formed the COVID-19 CAB Coalition (CCC). The CCC includes folks from the COVID-19 Prevention Network's Community Engagement Group, ACTG's ACTIV-2 CAB, AVAC's COVID-19 Advocates Advisory Board, The National CFAR Coalition,

Stony Brook's COVID-19 CAB, Community Partners, and DAIDS. This resource page includes links to prevention and therapeutic studies, general information on COVID-19, links to webinars, and social media accounts to follow.

- [Action Alert](#): a sign-on document by the Women's HIV Research Collaborative asking for all to commit to scientific accuracy and cultural sensitivity in HIV and COVID-19 research communications
- [Transgender Training Resources Homepage](#): the Division of AIDS at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has put all its amazing resources related to research with transgender communities in one place. All resources are free; you may just need to create a free account if you don't have one already.
- [Women in HIV Cure-Related Research](#): a free downloadable training
- [Biomedical HIV Prevention for Women](#): a free downloadable training
- [Webinar Library](#): a collection of over 30 of our webinar recordings on topics such as HIV & race, HIV & women, HIV genetic sequencing, HIV & aging, outreach & marketing, Native Americans & HIV, microbicides research, pregnancy & lactation in HIV research, HIV in the Latinx community, community engagement, and more.

Important Upcoming Dates

- Tuesday, December 1: [World AIDS Day](#)
- January 15-16: [National African American MSM Leadership Conference on Health Disparities & Social Justice](#)
- January 27-28: [HIV Research for Prevention Conference](#) (Part 1)
- February 3-4: [HIV Research for Prevention Conference](#) (Part 2)
- February 7: [National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day](#)