Watch People Living With HIV Become a Work of ART

The “I Am a Work of ART” campaign promotes viral suppression and U=U among folks living with HIV but not on antiretroviral therapy.

August 5, 2022 By Trent Straube

What is it like to be a living, breathing work of ART? Nine people who have HIV share that experience in the federal campaign “I Am a Work of ART.” Featuring videos, posters, social media posts and more, the campaign’s goal is to “encourage people with HIV who are not in care to seek care, remain in care, and achieve viral suppression,” explains HIV.gov.

Viral suppression—meaning that HIV is undetectable—is achieved by taking HIV meds known as antiretroviral therapy, or ART. Folks diagnosed with HIV who take meds and maintain an undetectable viral load not only experience slower disease progression and live healthier and longer lives, but they also don’t transmit HIV to their partners via sex, a fact referred to as Undetectable Equals Untransmittable, or U=U.

In the video below, Harold Phillips, MRP, director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, discusses “I Am a Work of ART.

“It’s a campaign that features nine people living with HIV,” Phillips says, “who tell their stories of their journey through life before HIV, then with HIV as well as getting into HIV medical care and taking their HIV medications and what it all means to them and what they’ve been able to accomplish by being in consistent medical care and taking their medications. It’s really exciting hearing from people with lived experience influencing the campaign.”



View this post on Instagram

A post shared by HIV.gov (@hivgov)

Samples of the campaign social media posts are embedded throughout this article, but visit the website for more campaign materials, including posters, flyers and business cards you can download and print.

The I Am a Work of ART website describes the campaigns history and need:

> The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched the campaign in June 2022, as part of the federal Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. (EHE) initiative. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates the overall viral suppression rate in the United States is 53%. Therefore, a key strategy to prevent new HIV transmissions is increasing the proportion of people with HIV who are virally suppressed.
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> Both the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and the EHE initiative aim to reduce new HIV infections in the United States by 90% by 2030.
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> Using a co-creation approach, HHS engaged traditional and nontraditional HIV stakeholders and people with HIV in eight EHE priority jurisdictions across the U.S. to develop “I am a Work of ART.” Campaign materials feature a diverse group of people with HIV, who share personal stories about getting into care and using antiretroviral therapy (ART) to achieve viral suppression.

The I Am a Work of ART campaign was promoted during the 24th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2022), which wrapped up earlier this week in Montreal; for a POZ roundup of the research and news from the event, click #AIDS 2020.

Excited to showcase @HIVGov's new "I am a Work of Art" campaign. It encourages people with HIV to get care, stay in care, and achieve viral suppression, and is one of our many efforts aimed at ending the HIV epidemic. #AIDS2022 https://t.co/n433ncqCIn pic.twitter.com/pn9oe2rxVu

— ADM Rachel Levine (@HHS_ASH) August 1, 2022

Launched in 2019 by President Donald Trump, the Ending the HIV Epidemic plan aims to lower new HIV rates by 75% by 2025 and by 90% by 2030. This would amount to fewer than 3,000 HIV cases a year. "Reducing new infections to this level," according to the initiative, "would essentially mean that HIV transmissions would be rare and meet the definition of ending the epidemic."

The strategy for reaching these benchmarks involves investing federal funding and resources in programs such as Rapid Start and PrEP in 57 key jurisdictions. These are the 48 counties nationwide plus Washington, DC; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and seven rural states with high HIV burdens (Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma and South Carolina) that together account for 50% of new HIV cases.

What's more, the Ending the Epidemic initiative is built upon four key strategies: Diagnose, Treat, Prevent, and Respond to HIV. To learn more about the initiative, read an overview at HIV.gov and visit the official webpage at HRSA.org. For a related POZ article, see "Plans to End the HIV Epidemic at Home and Abroad."

Similarly, the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, recently updated for 2022–2025, also aims to reduce new HIV infections by 75% by 2025 and by 90% by 2030 but lays out different objectives and strategies for reaching those targets. To learn more in POZ, see "What's New in the Updated National HIV/AIDS Strategy?"

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