

On World AIDS Day, FIRS Highlights Link Between HIV and TB

1 December 2018

Tuberculosis (TB) is the world's leading infectious disease and it accounts for one in three deaths from HIV/AIDS, according to the World Health Organization's (WHO) [2018 report on TB](#). This is why on World AIDS Day the [Forum of International Respiratory Societies](#) (FIRS), of which PATS is a member, calls on governments, health advocates and non-government organisations to strengthen their response to AIDS and TB.

"AIDS and TB are a deadly combination," said Polly Parsons, MD, President of American Thoracic Society, a FIRS founding member. "In the developing world, TB is often the first sign a person has HIV. Together, the diseases are far worse than they are alone."

Shortly after AIDS emerged, it fuelled a global resurgence of TB that continues in many low and middle-income countries. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV infection is the strongest risk factor for progressing from latent to active TB.

WHO estimates that the risk of developing TB is 16-27 times greater in people who are infected with HIV than those who are not. Those infected with HIV are also at greater risk of dying from pneumocystis jiroveci pneumonia (PCP), the most common opportunistic infection of HIV, and from bacterial pneumonia and Kaposi sarcoma.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, AIDS has claimed 35 million lives and left 17 million children without one or both parents. Today nearly 40 million people are living with the disease. Of those, about 25 million live in Africa, according to the WHO.

Effective antiretroviral treatment of the disease has increased to approximately 59 percent of those infected with HIV, but the WHO's recent report on the disease highlights that people living with the disease in countries in the Eastern Mediterranean and in South-East Asia are much less likely to receive antiretroviral therapies.

FIRS believes a global response to HIV/AIDS can be strengthened by:

- Increasing awareness of the continuing global threat of HIV-related disease and its link to TB and other respiratory diseases.



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- Improving the health outcomes of people living with HIV through patient care and research into improved treatments and treatment strategies for both HIV and TB.
- Reducing the incidence and severity of HIV-related disease by strengthening mother-to-child transmission prevention programs and increasing the early use of antiretroviral therapy.
- Improving HIV education in at-risk communities to reduce the incidence of new HIV infections.
- Reducing HIV-related health disparities and inequities.

“The world has made considerable progress in fighting both AIDS and TB through research, education and better treatments, and prevention strategies,” Dr. Parsons said. “But to meet the goal the United Nations set to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030, we will have to redouble our global efforts to stop both of these deadly diseases.”

View the [fact sheet](#).

About the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS)

[The Forum of International Respiratory Societies](#) (FIRS) is an organisation comprised of the world's leading international respiratory societies working together to improve lung health globally: [American College of Chest Physicians](#) (CHEST), [American Thoracic Society](#) (ATS), [Asian Pacific Society of Respirology](#) (APSR), [Asociación Latino Americana De Tórax](#) (ALAT), [European Respiratory Society](#) (ERS), [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases](#) (The Union), [Pan African Thoracic Society](#) (PATS), [Global Initiative for Asthma](#) (GINA), and the [Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease](#) (GOLD).

The goal of FIRS is to unify and enhance efforts to improve lung health through the combined work of its more than 70,000 members globally.

For more information about FIRS please contact Lisa Roscoe lisa.roscoe@firsnet.org.



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Fact Sheet: World AIDS Day 1 December 2018

AIDS: Progress, but Still a Major Global Killer

- AIDS has claimed more than 35 million lives worldwide since the beginning of the pandemic. In 2017, alone, nearly a million people died, and 1.8 million became newly infected, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Nearly 40 million people around the world are living with the disease. Of these, more than 25 million live in Africa. The WHO also estimates that 4.1 percent of the African population between the ages of 15 and 49 are infected with the virus.
- Since the beginning of the pandemic, 17 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS, according to the Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR).
- Worldwide, 1.8 million children under the age of 15 are HIV positive, estimates the United Nations program on AIDS (UNAIDS).
- In sub-Saharan Africa, three in four new infections are among girls aged 15–19 years, according to UNAIDS.
- In the United States, African Americans accounted for 44 percent of HIV diagnoses in 2016, yet they make up only 12 percent of the population, amfAR estimates.
- In 2017, 59 percent of those infected received antiretroviral treatment, including 60 percent of those infected in Africa. The WHO reports the lowest rates of treatment were found in Eastern Mediterranean countries (18 percent) and in South-East Asia countries (51 percent).
- Globally, new HIV infections have been reduced by nearly half since the peak in 1996, according to UNAIDS.
- Annual death from AIDS-related causes have declined by nearly half in the past ten years, but the decline is not fast enough to reach the UN target of fewer than 500,000 deaths in 2020, says amfAR.

AIDS, TB and Other Respiratory Diseases

- Respiratory symptoms are common in those with HIV. Other studies have shown that smoking is more prevalent among those with HIV, compounding the problem of respiratory disease in this population.
- Shortly after it emerged, HIV/AIDS fuelled a global resurgence of tuberculosis that continues in many low- and middle-income countries. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV infection is the strongest risk factor for progressing from latent to active TB.
- The risk of developing TB is between 16-27 times greater in people living with HIV than among those without HIV infection, the WHO estimates.
- Tuberculosis, the world's leading infectious killer, accounts for one in three AIDS deaths, according to WHO's 2018 TB report.
- In 2016, of the 10.4 million people who developed TB, 1.2 million were living with HIV. People living with HIV with no TB symptoms need TB preventative therapy, which lessens the risk of developing TB and reduces TB/ HIV death rates by around 40 percent, UNAIDS asserts.
- Those infected with HIV are also at greater risk of dying from pneumocystis jiroveci pneumonia (PCP), the most common opportunistic infection of HIV, and from bacterial pneumonia and Kaposi sarcoma.

The FIRS Response

The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) calls on governments, health care programs, clinicians, public health specialists, and non-government organisations to strengthen their responses to HIV/AIDS by:

- Increasing awareness of the continuing global threat of HIV-related disease and its connection to TB and other respiratory diseases.
- Improving HIV education of at-risk communities to reduce the incidence of new HIV infections and decrease health disparities.
- Reducing the incidence and severity of HIV-related disease by strengthening mother-to-child transmission prevention programs and increasing the early use of antiretroviral therapy.
- Ending HIV-associated TB through TB infection control, preventive therapy, and widespread use of antiretroviral therapy.
- Adequately funding research into improved treatments for both HIV and TB.

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FIRS calls on governments, health care providers, funders and public health specialists to ensure:

- Better access to life saving vaccines for every child and adults.
- Universal access to health care systems and effective treatment, particularly oxygen and antibiotics, avoiding misuse of antibiotics to reduce resistance.
- Initiatives to reduce tobacco smoking and indoor air pollution.
- Access to safe drinking water and sanitation.
- Strong prevention of mother to child HIV transmission programs and use of antiretroviral therapy to reduce HIV-associated pneumonia.
- Increased funding to develop better ways to diagnose, treat and prevent pneumonia.

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