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**HIV Prevention Drug Approved in South Africa**

The Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation Hails Approval of PrEP to Combat HIV Infections in South Africa

8 December 2015, (Cape Town, South Africa) – The Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation (DTHF) unequivocally hails the Medicines Control Council’s (MCC) approval of the HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis also known as PrEP. PrEP is a fixed-dose combination of tenofovir disoproxyl fumarate and emtricitabine. PrEP has been proven, when taken as prescribed, to be highly effective at preventing HIV infections if an HIV-negative person is exposed to the virus.

Approval of PrEP brings a major tool the goal of Ending AIDS to the Republic. Dr. Linda-Gail Bekker, Deputy Director of the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation pronounced that “adding PrEP to the arsenal of interventions available to control HIV is a major step forward for South Africa. We are in the midst of a “prevention revolution” and have a great opportunity to really begin to reduce new infections in all populations, especially those who are young and particularly vulnerable to infection. It is critical to have this powerful intervention at our disposal.”

The World Health Organisation (WHO) now also recommends that people at “substantial” risk of HIV should be offered preventive antiretroviral treatment to prevent HIV acquisition in the form of PrEP as it should be packaged with other services such as HIV testing, counselling and support, and access to condoms. These recommendations come in addition to stating that every person who is living with HIV should have access to treatment to improve their quality of life and reduce transmissions to HIV-negative individuals. UNAIDS estimates that expanding access to ARVs and PrEP will avert 21 million AIDS-related deaths and prevent 28 million new infections by 2030 if implemented.

South Africa has once again taken the lead in ensuring the health of its citizens. Now that PrEP is approved in South Africa, Dr. Bekker stated: “Our next step is to support the Department of Health to quickly figure out the best way to make PrEP available to those most at-risk for HIV infection. Turning off the tap to new infections is a critical investment for the future of South Africa.”

The research, clinical and community outreach staff share a common purpose to support HIV-related work of treatment, care, prevention and education particularly in the most vulnerable key populations, whilst staying abreast of new developments and continuing to contribute to cutting edge information in HIV, public health, social and clinical research.

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*About the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation:*
Commissioned in 2004, the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation is part of an accredited research grouping focused on direct community engagement and support throughout Southern Africa that is fully self-funded by grants within the University of Cape Town.