

Media release

Bern, 18 July 2016 / sba

HIV: early treatment prevents further infections

If people infected with HIV are treated successfully, the risk of infection is also infinitesimally small during unprotected sexual intercourse. That is to say, the medicinal therapy not only protects the infected person against an outbreak of disease, but also protects their partner against an infection. An international study in which Bern University Hospital was involved shows this.

The 21st International Aids Conference begins today in Durban. Eradicating the disease is the declared goal of scientists, politicians and health experts who are gathering in South Africa. The PARTNER study, whose results have now been published, proves among other things that this goal is achievable. It shows that successfully treated HIV-infected people also practically cannot infect their partner during unprotected sexual intercourse.

A total of 888 couples, of which one partner was infected with HIV, had sex without a condom over more than one year on average. No infection came about during this observation period. The Department of Infectious Diseases at Bern University Hospital was involved in the study. Head Physician Hansjakob Furrer thinks the results are important: "Early and successful HIV therapy can practically completely prevent the transmission of the virus. HIV could basically be eradicated as a result."

Testing brings clarity, treatment brings protection

The earlier an HIV infection is detected and treated, the better. For those infected as well as their partner! HIV is treated with so-called antiretroviral drugs. A condition for the success of therapy is that the drugs are taken daily and consistently. But about 2,000 people in Switzerland do not even know that they are infected with HIV. So they also do not have access to counselling and treatment. That is why the recommendation must be: anyone who has exposed themselves to a risk situation or is uncertain should have themselves tested. This is also possible anonymously at the HIV Counselling Centre in the Polyclinic for Infectious Diseases at Bern University Hospital and at AIDS Hilfe Bern counselling centre.

Study link: <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=2533066>

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