

## Formal Opening

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### Getting to Zero HIV in The Bahamas: Progress and Opportunities

*S Read*

**Objective:** To review the national health promotion and prevention initiatives launched in The Bahamas to meet The World AIDS Day theme's objectives: getting to zero: zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS deaths.

**Method:** The national programmes and research initiated in The Bahamas, since the AIDS epidemic in The Bahamas (1980s), were identified and analysed regarding methodologies, impact and outcomes. The projects identified were: (i) prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT); (ii) the care cascade – identification of HIV<sup>+</sup> persons through counselling and screening, entry and retention in care, effective treatment and reduction in viral load to < 40; (iii) studies to determine the knowledge, attitudes and practices related to male circumcision by healthcare practitioners, men in the police and defence forces, and focus groups of cohorts of gay men, and heterosexual males and females.

**Results:** All HIV<sup>+</sup> pregnant women were identified and treated with HIV prophylaxis prior to delivery and breast-feeding was not recommended. There was a dramatic reduction in mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) from 30% pre-treatment to < 3%; a sustained reduction in the incidence of HPV transmission for both men and women; and more than half of the healthcare providers surveyed were in favour of male circumcision.

**Conclusion:** The national programmes have been effective and show promise to a future of eradicating HIV infections, discrimination and deaths. This augurs well for continuing health promotion and prevention initiatives in The Bahamas and advancing new ones, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), immunization and gene therapy.

### The Royal Bank of Canada Lecture: Implementing Sound Health-policies; the Case of Non-communicable Diseases in the Caribbean

*Sir George Alleyne*

Non-communicable diseases [NCDs] (cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory disease) are of particular relevance in the Caribbean at this time, because of their high incidence and also because of the protagonism of the region that contributed to their attracting more global attention. The data on NCDs in the Caribbean are clear and the morbidity mortality and social implications have been described in several publications. Policy for control of these diseases in the Caribbean and elsewhere can be made by several of the actors in the state, but of greatest significance is that made by governments which can change the regulatory framework to allow individuals to exercise healthy choice. The Port-of-Spain Declaration of 2007 on the prevention and control of NCDs represents the political decision to address these diseases in the Caribbean, but the evidence is now clear that there is a significant gap between the politics and the policies. The nature of this gap and the mechanisms for closing it lie in understanding the complexities of the whole of government and whole of society interactions critical for resolving issues of this nature. There are research questions, including the nature of disease framing, peculiar to the Caribbean which if addressed may contribute to the solution of the problem which does not lie solely in the production of evidence.