Ethical Standards vis-à-vis Prevention in Biomedical Prevention Trials
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Two Provisos

• Ethical argument needs to be based on best evidence.
  – Apologies, but I have not had the opportunity to review the clinical, public health and behavioural science evidence
  – This is therefore highly provisional and aims at opening up discussion only.

• Need to avoid HIV exceptionalism.
Levels of Ethical Analysis in the Debate

• The clinical ethics of the healthcare worker/client relationship
• The public health ethics of policy/population intervention
• The ethics of STD prevention in the context of one’s personal life and social situation.
• Research Ethics
TasP

- The HIV+ individual starts Rx at a much higher CD4 count than usual now.
  - Possibly on diagnosis.
  - This reduces their transmission risk to near zero.
Clinical Ethical questions about TasP

• Risk/benefit of the Rx
  – No additional clinical benefit to pt
  – Some additional clinical risk

• Behavioural and psychosocial impact on pt
  – Modifies psychological adjustment to Dx?
  – Modifies risk-behaviour?
  – Promotes testing in partners?
  – Impact on relationship/s?
Public Health Ethical Questions about TasP

• Distributive justice
  – Price, availability across all global populations
    • Reduction of availability to poorest/most in need?
• Role in containing/reducing transmission in populations
• Behavioural impacts across whole populations
PreP

• The HIV- person takes ARV to protect against infection
  – In serodiscordant long-term relationships
    • E.g. where conception is intended.
  – In (planned) high risk behaviour
Clinical Ethical Questions in PreP

• Will ARV be available OTC or will it require prescription or pharmacy dispensing?
• Counselling about risk behaviour?
• “We have to treat people as they are, not as we think or wish they should be”.
Public Health Ethical questions in PreP

• Cost effectiveness of PreP vis-à-vis behaviour change interventions

• Unintended consequences of widespread availability of PreP vis-à-vis behaviour change
  – Both interventions to change behaviour
  – And the behaviour changes which might follow widespread PreP availability.
Social and ethical questions

• As a person who is HIV+, what are my personal responsibilities regarding transmission risk?
  – Background: criminalisation of HIV transmission in some states
• As a person who is HIV-, what are my responsibilities?
• What are our responsibilities to each other in a world of TasP and PreP?
• Whose business is it anyway?
• “A pill for every ill”, or…?
Research Ethics

• Not necessarily more complex than the ethics of any other prevention trial.
• Equipoise vis-à-vis other methods of prevention
• A plea for trial as a public health measure, not a biomedical treatment
  – Behavioural impact, sociocultural meaning
Thank you – over to you

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