

AIDS is Over, Isn't It?!

☒ Recently I attended a reception promoting global solutions for a very worthy social issue at which several celebrities were speaking. Each had personal reasons for putting their imprimatur on the project, which were both interesting and compelling.

But it struck me when one said, “We’ve already taken care of so many other things—like AIDS—it’s time to move on to this one.” While those of us working in HIV/AIDS continue to talk about getting to an AIDS-free generation, we fully understand that HIV/AIDS has not yet “been taken care of.”

In reality there is much more to do. In fact, according to the UNAIDS Fast-Track report, *Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030*, the gap between where the response is now and where it should be is quite wide. UNAIDS believes that the next five years (2015-2020) represent the best hope for humanity to put the epidemic on the fast track towards its end.

Anyone who thinks that we have effectively “taken care of HIV/AIDS” is sadly mistaken. We still have a long, long way to go. Without the commitment of global leaders to increased funding and fast-track programming, we will be living with HIV/AIDS for a very long time.

“There is a strong global consensus that the tools exist to end the AIDS epidemic,” the report states. “The achievement of targets built on these tools now needs to be fast tracked. Fast-tracking the end of the AIDS epidemic is possible by working together—fostering innovation, securing sustainable financing, strengthening health systems and communities, ensuring commodity security, promoting human rights and ensuring access to HIV prevention and treatment services.”

UNAIDS says, “Quickening the pace to achieve the Fast-Track

Targets would reverse the AIDS epidemic by 2020. With achievement of these new targets, by 2030 the epidemic would be dwindling.”

In contrast, UNAIDS warns that, “Business as usual (keeping service coverage at 2013 levels), means the epidemic will have rebounded by 2030, representing an even more serious threat to the world’s future health and well-being and requiring substantial resources for what could then be an uncontrolled epidemic.”

This sobering report comes at a time when resources for HIV/AIDS are scarce. Funding levels for the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) are equal to 2011 levels, with no increase in sight. Funding for the Global Fund to Fight HIV, Malaria and Tuberculosis are not up to projected levels.

Be part of ending AIDS by becoming more engaged. Explain to friends and colleagues that we CAN do it, but we all need to work together in the right way to actually accomplish it.

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