

The Impact of U=U Messaging Across the HIV Continuum

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12 July 2024



Overview

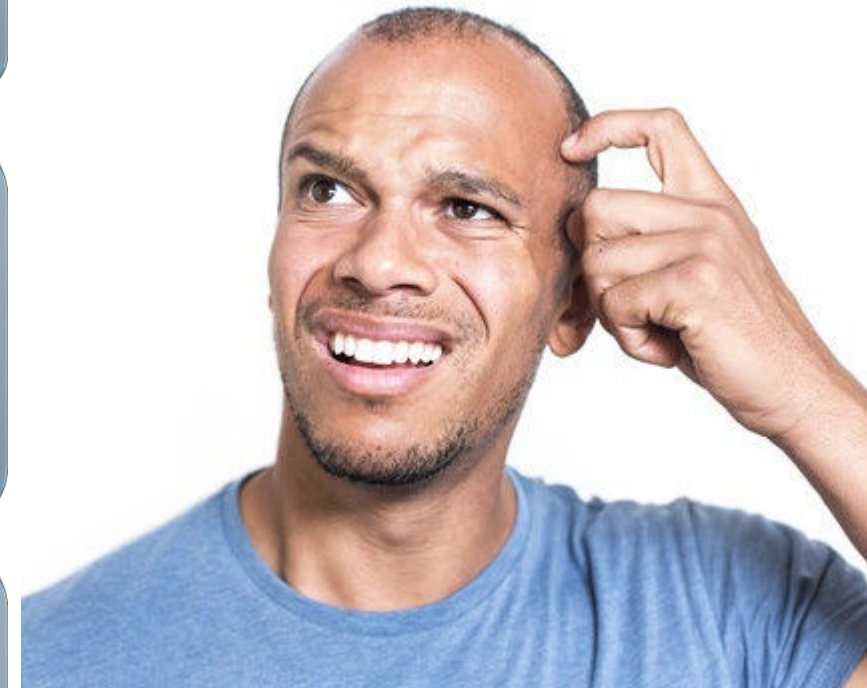
- What is U=U?
- Building the science behind U=U
- U=U global movement
- U=U benefits
- The impact of U=U in HTS and retention to care
- Innovative strategies and stakeholders' role
- SBCC and psychosocial support
- Challenges and barriers

What is Undetectable Equals Untransmittable (U=U)?

U=U means a person living with HIV who is taking their treatment as prescribed and achieves and maintains an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV to their sexual partners

Adherence to daily treatment: Taking HIV medicine as prescribed is the best way to achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load (<200 copies/ml). Poor adherence, such as missing multiple doses in a month, may increase a person's viral load and as a result, their risk of transmitting HIV

U=U depends on achieving and maintaining an undetectable viral load (<200 copies/ml). People living with HIV with a detectable viral load should be supported to achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load



U=U: Building The Evidence

- Since 1988, multiple studies have demonstrated that sexual transmission does not occur with an undetectable viral load
- PARTNER study: ‘tipping point’ in understanding U=U and guiding messaging
- PARTNER2 study: these results gave scientists and advocates the confidence to be definitive
- Viral load is the single biggest determinant of HIV transmission risk



U=U Global Movement

U=U movement
has engaged
more than 1000
organisations
from 105
countries

Vietnam officially endorsed U=U
via national guidelines and is the
first PEPFAR country to achieve
viral suppression among over
95% of people on antiretroviral
treatment.

CDC endorsed U=U in
2019

WHO testing guidelines includes
U=U

WHO published VL policy brief in
2023

US Official HIV
treatment guidelines
were updated in 2019
to include U=U

UNAIDS published
UNAIDS explainer and
a press release in 2019
in support of U=U

U=U Impact in Stigma and Quality of Life

Author/s	Intervention outcomes	Study Conclusion
The Lancet, 2017	U=U message brings piece of mind	The U = U message encapsulates two important aspects of HIV care: knowing your HIV status bring peace of mind and ART initiation improves health
Rivera, 2019	U=U reduces stigma	A US study mentioned that tailored U = U messaging reduced HIV stigma in its varying forms in the general population
Agaku, 2022	U=U improves testing uptake and reduces stigma	Among South African adolescents, U=U belief was associated with reduced stigma perceptions and increased HIV testing compared to the SOC group
Smith, 2021	U=U increases HIV testing among men	S.A men (n = 125) returned for testing in the U = U group vs. n =76 in the SOC group
Xinhua, 2023	U=U contributed to the improvement of the 95 95 95 targets	The Malawi U=U campaign focused on Tizirombo Tochepa = Thanzi (T=T strategy) in Malawi, which literally means "low viral load equals healthy living." Malawi is also on course to achieving the 95:95:95 targets, with a 93:97:93 performance against the targets

The Power of U=U: Testimonies From PLHIV

tomorrow I will start taking my arvs am so happy, can't wait to glow like all of you ladies,, luckily I will Collect it

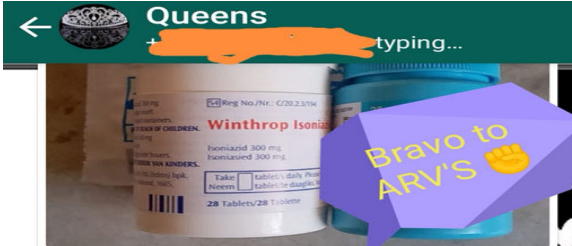
Re-engaging

Queens
7 is typing...

K hun 🥰 8:01 am

Morning Queens. Viral load from 46700 to 46, cd4count from 350 to 778. I'm super excited. Thanx for support Queens

Adherence & suppression

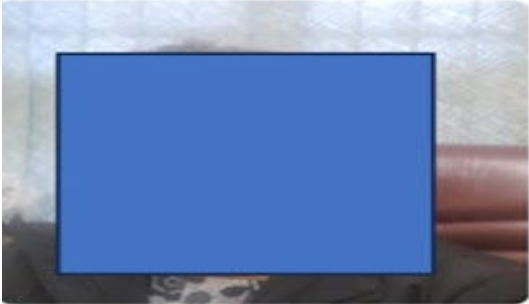


Queens just went to collect my stock 1st time from a public clinic 🦋🦋🦋... I was so scared and kept on putting it off. I went with hubby as we had never tested together n guess what they confirmed his negative 🦋. He kept on asking how come cause we've not being using condoms since 2017 and have 2 kids. I just kept smiling under my mask bcause of the power of U=U. The clinician was so friendly n well informed better than my previous doctor. I kept on thinking of u queens and was like we are leading an HIV free generation 🍌🍌🍌 Yeiiiiii in this day n age if yr not taking ur Jacksons it's all on your... I appreciate u all to the moon and back

TasP

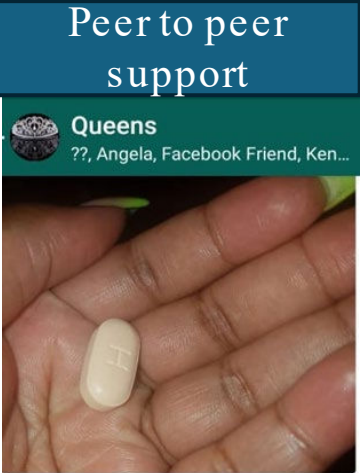
Eix I feel it but seeing you ladies post your results I'm SBWL to also be lower than detected then I'll go back

Re-engaging



15years living with this virus, 3 healthy kids, and a bonus of an HIV negative partner, thanks U=U

Adherence, suppression & vertical transmissions



Yey!! 3minutes left 7:58 pm

Peer to peer support

The Power Of U=U: Testimony From A Discordant Family

U=U in reality

The wife has been living with HIV for 22 years. The husband and their 2 daughters are HIV negative



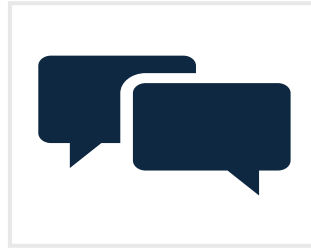
“ With the right HIV treatment, effective HIV monitoring system, right information, right attitude - we can beat HIV”

Dukashe Family

Innovative Communication Strategies & Stakeholders Role



Convene information sessions or activations, such as talks at the facility or at community level, providing health education promoting the U=U messaging



Share information during community dialogues and campaigns



Share information such as IEC material and toolkits via emails



Distribute material on social media platforms with hashtags
#UequalsU
#ViralLoadTesting
#ViralLoadResults

Challenges and Barriers

Challenges:

- ❖ U=U uptake does not match its scientific promise.
- ❖ Providers do not communicate the message to people living with HIV and recipients of care.
- ❖ Likewise, U=U does not inform couples' counselling, specifically discordant couples seeking advice on safer conception.
- ❖ Ministers of Health are reluctant to adopt and launch U=U

Misconceptions/Barriers (no supporting evidence)

U=U message will replace condoms, it will increase STI transmissions, there maybe negligible transmission risk, re-infection risks etc

IMPORTANT



U=U is not meant to replace PreP/PeP and Condoms

But promote 



HIV infections
AIDS related
Deaths

Viral Suppression

HAART initiations
Total Remaining on
ART (TROA)
VL monitoring

PLWHIV will:
Live Longer
Practice SRHR freely
Have healthy & happy
relationships

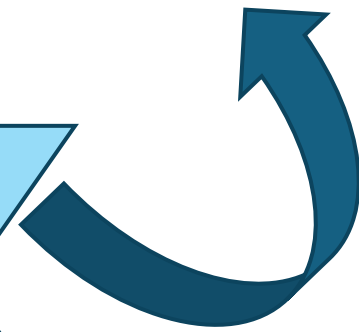
Viral Load
Before
ART

Viral Load
With
ART

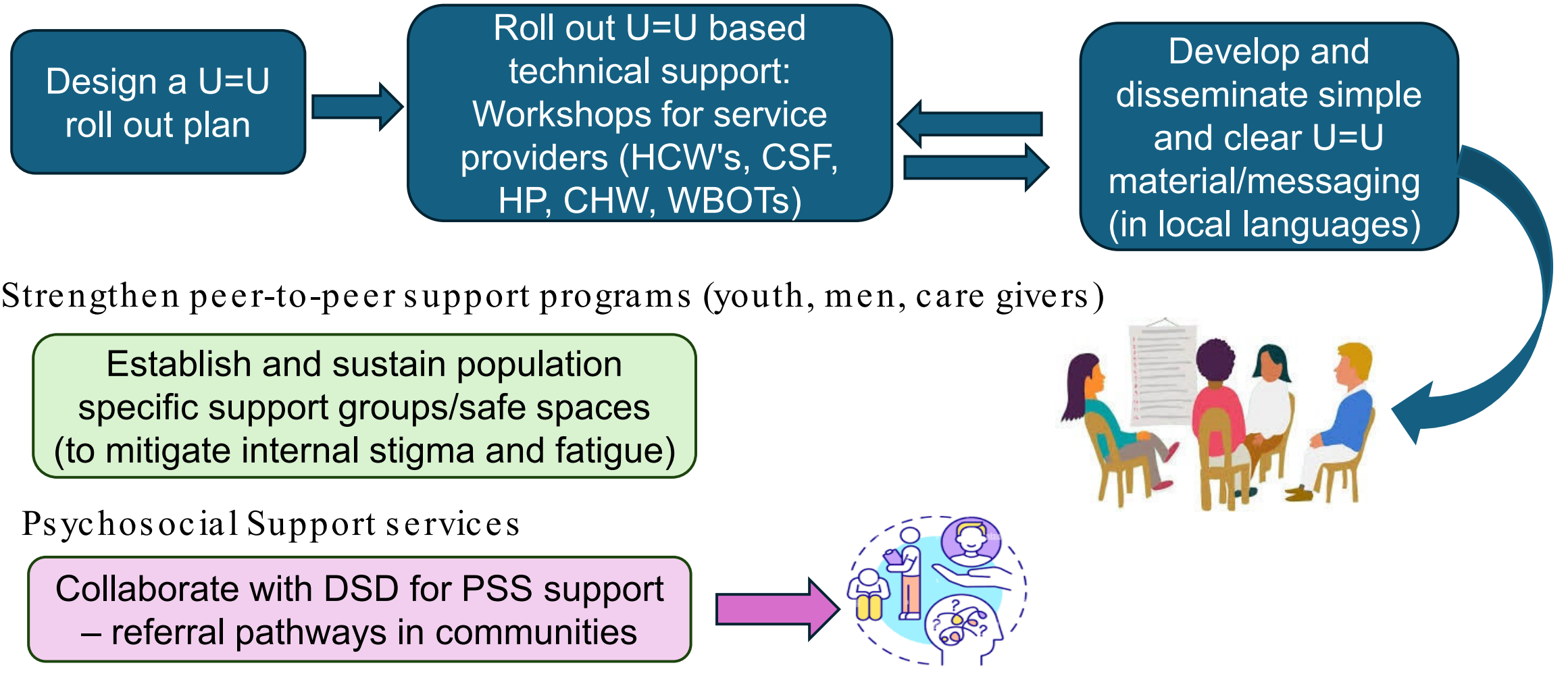


Detectable
Level

Undetectable
Level

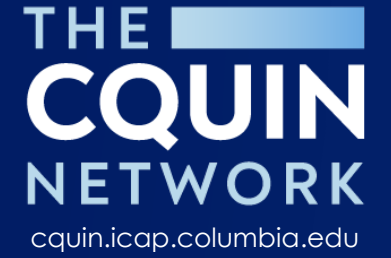


Identifying the Low Hanging Fruit - Align with Social and Behaviour Change Communication and Psychosocial Support Services



What Role Can Stakeholders Play in Promoting U=U to Improve Testing, Retention, and VL Suppression?

- Ministries of Health must endorse and launch U=U national campaigns (integrate in policies)
- Donors must provide resources for U=U scale up
- Implementing partners must render technical support and collaborate for local launches
- Civil Society Organizations must lead local U=U campaigns (material development, dissemination and local launches)



Thank You!

