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“Undetectable = Untransmittable” — Campaign against HIV stigma gets boost in Ireland

FACT: People living with HIV who are on effective treatment cannot pass on HIV to their sexual partners.

That’s the message at the centre of a campaign against HIV stigma that got a huge boost this week when it began appearing on video advertising screens around Dublin.

A collaboration between the website MASC. and HIV activist group ACT UP Dublin, the campaign features people in Ireland who are living with HIV sharing positive messages about the health and prevention benefits of treatment.

Eithne MacSweeney from Micromedia said:

“We are very excited to be working with ACT UP Dublin on the 'Undetectable = Untransmittable' campaign. In using our public platform, we hope to assist ACT UP in sharing scientific facts and removing the stigma surrounding HIV today.

It's very rewarding to be able to use our screen network to help circulate this incredibly important information and create a shift in the language and imagery we use around HIV, its treatment and those living with it.

We are also thrilled to be the media providers for the first ever digital outdoor campaign for U=U in Ireland!”

Using the phrase “Undetectable = Untransmittable” (often shortened to “U=U” or #UequalsU) the campaign is part of an international effort to promote awareness of the fact that effective HIV treatment is also effective HIV prevention.

When someone is on effective treatment for HIV their “viral load” —the amount of virus in their blood—gets very low, sometimes referred to as “undetectable”. A series of large studies have confirmed that when someone’s viral load is undetectable, it’s not possible for them to transmit the virus sexually. That’s true even if condoms, PrEP, or PEP are not used —there’s simply no risk of passing the virus on to a sexual partner.

Quotes from ACT UP Dublin members Tonie Walsh and Robbie Lawlor in the ads highlight the personal impact of U=U, and the positive, bright colour scheme aims to challenge gloomy and outdated ideas about living with HIV.

The ads will run over the next four weeks at a variety of locations in Dublin and Cork including gyms, bars, and key on-street screens.

The launch of the new phase of the campaign comes on the heels of the publication of the results of the PARTNER 2 study at the beginning of May. That study confirmed the results of previous studies and real-world experience—that there is no risk of sexual transmission of HIV with an undetectable viral load—and concluded: “Our findings support the message of the U=U (undetectable equals untransmittable) campaign, and the benefits of early testing and treatment for HIV.”

The U=U message has been endorsed by hundreds of community organisations, medical bodies, and health authorities including UNAIDS, the US Centers for Disease Control, and the NHS. The HSE says, “If you are taking HIV treatment correctly, achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load, there is effectively no risk of passing HIV onto others.”

In a 2017 editorial, *The Lancet HIV* described the impact of the international U=U campaign:

U=U is a simple but hugely important campaign based on a solid foundation of scientific evidence. It has already been successful in influencing public opinion, causing more people with HIV (and their friends and families) to comprehend that they can live long, healthy lives, have children, and never have to worry about passing on their infection to others.

///ENDS

Text from the ad:

Tonie: “Being undetectable these past nine years has been utterly liberating for me.”

Robbie: “Taking my HIV medication every day keeps me healthy and protects my boyfriend.”

FACT: People living with HIV who are on effective treatment, **cannot** pass on HIV to their sexual partners.

U=U/Undetectable = Untransmittable

Visit: actupdublin.com/uequalsu

Read their stories on www.masc.life

About Us

Micromedia are an alternative digital outdoor advertising company, passionate about culture and the arts. We are committed to creating a positive stimulus in the public realm and are battling to drive forward new territories using our platform, accessible to everyone.



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ACT UP Dublin is a local chapter of ACT UP, The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, an international HIV activist organisation. ACT UP Dublin was founded in July 2016 to take action on Ireland’s HIV crisis. We seek a more urgent and effective response to HIV from government, community organisations, and the public at large.



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Masc.life is website about the lives of men who are not straight. Through long and short interviews, visual stories, and personal commentary masc.life investigates the fascinating things gay, bi, and queer cisgender and transgender men are doing; where and how they are living; what they think about themselves, each other, and the world; how they look and what they wear; and what it means to be a man, if anything, prefaced by the above terms today.



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