

IAPAC Lauds Launch of National HIV/AIDS Strategy, Urges Adequate Funding and Accelerated Implementation

Statement by José M. Zuniga, President, International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care

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The International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care (IAPAC) lauds the Obama Administration for launching a National HIV/AIDS Strategy that, in its strategic framework and if adequately funded, can help achieve significant progress in the US response to its HIV epidemic. Reducing the number of new HIV infections and increasing access to care, treatment, and support for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) have proven to be important components of any national response to HIV/AIDS. In coupling these two components with that of reducing HIV-related health disparities - especially in relation to women, communities of color, and most at-risk populations (MARPs) - the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, if implemented at an accelerated pace, is an effective prescription against a disease that has been allowed to run rampant from coast to coast for the past decade.

By underfunding prevention, care, and treatment programs; and by basing public health decision-making on ideology versus science, the US Government has in the past failed to embrace its own standard for countries of the global South to adopt sound, evidence-based national HIV/AIDS strategies. That is what makes today's announcement of a National HIV/AIDS Strategy - one that outlines a more coordinated national response and involved all stakeholders, including PLWHAs - so pivotal to stemming a tide of human devastation and unnecessary death in the United States.

The milestones laid out in the National HIV/AIDS Strategy are also greatly welcome. They infuse our individual and collective efforts with a sense of accountability to achieve measurable results that will help save and enhance the lives of countless Americans at risk for and living with HIV/AIDS. There exists a reservoir of commitment and experience that must be harnessed to achieve these milestones within a quicker timeframe. Through almost 30 years of heart-wrenching suffering due to as well as incredible strides made against this insidious disease, we have a ready army of seasoned advocates - public health experts; clinicians and allied healthcare and laypeople providers; AIDS service organizations; community- and faith-based organizations; academic institutions; and professional associations - that can help to accelerate implementation and thus allow for more quickly achieving many of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy's objectives. As President Barack Obama has said, "The Federal government can't do this alone, nor should it." The 5,000-plus US members of IAPAC stand ready to follow President Obama's lead in implementing the National HIV/AIDS Strategy.

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The International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care (IAPAC) is a professional medical association with more than 13,000 physicians and allied healthcare professionals in over 100 countries. Its mission is to improve the quality of prevention, care, treatment, and support services provided to people at risk for and living with HIV/AIDS worldwide.

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