



Glossary: HIV Related Definitions

Modified: Center for HIV Information, University of California and Center for AIDS Research, NYU School of Medicine

A

Advocacy and support groups: Organizations and groups that actively support participants and their families with valuable resources, including self-empowerment and survival tools.

Antibody: An infection-fighting protein molecule in blood or body fluid that tags, neutralizes, and helps destroy bacteria, viruses or other harmful toxins. Antibodies, known generally as immunoglobulins, are made by white blood cells in response to a foreign substance. Each specific antibody binds only to the specific antigen that stimulated its production.

Antiretroviral: (ARV) The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) belongs to a class of viruses that are called retroviruses. Drugs that control the growth of the virus are called antiretrovirals.

Approved drugs: In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must approve a substance as a drug before it can be marketed. The approval process involves several steps including pre-clinical laboratory and animal studies, clinical trials for safety and efficacy, filing of a New Drug Application by the manufacturer of the drug, FDA review of the application, and FDA approval/rejection of application [See Food and Drug Administration].

ART: Antiretroviral treatment. Formally known as HAART [Highly Active Antiretroviral Treatment], ART is defined as treatment with at least three active anti-retroviral medications (ARVs), typically two nucleoside or nucleotide reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs) plus a non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NNRTI) or a protease inhibitor (PI). ART is often called the drug “cocktail” or triple-therapy.

B

Bactrim: An antibiotic that is used to treat common bacterial infections such as ear and intestinal infections and pneumonia. It also has some activity against malaria. It is used prophylactically to prevent infections in HIV infected patients. Also known as cotrimoxazole, trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, Septrin.

C

CBO: Community Based Organization. A group of individuals or independent groups that form an organization to address issues within their community.

CD4 cell counts: A white blood cell that mobilizes the immune defense when the body has an infection. CD4 cell count is a measure of the immune system’s health. HIV specifically attacks and destroys CD4 cells and most HIV infected patients have low CD4 counts.

Clinical: Pertaining to or founded on observation and treatment of participants, as distinguished from theoretical or basic science.

Combination therapy: Two or more antiretroviral drugs or treatments used together to achieve optimum results against HIV infection and/or AIDS. Combining drugs has proved to be more effective at reducing the amount of the HIV in the body than the use of single drugs by themselves.

Complete blood count [CBC]: A measure of the health of blood, including the quality and quantity of its white and red blood cells, the CBC includes 13 tests. 3 main tests: White Blood Cell Count (WBC), Hemoglobin (HGB), Platelets.

Confidentiality: Refers to maintaining the confidentiality of HIV infected patients to avoid discrimination and stigmatization.

Cotrimoxazole: see Bactrim

D

Developing Country: See resource poor country.

Drug resistance: Occurs when the virus a person is infected with is no longer sensitive to the medications taken.

E

Efficacy: (Of a drug or treatment). The maximum ability of a drug or treatment to produce a result regardless of dosage.

ELISA (enzyme-linked immunoabsorbent assay): a blood test that detects antibodies based on a reaction that leads to a color change in the test tube. The HIV ELISA is commonly used as the initial screening test because it is relatively easy and inexpensive to perform. A positive HIV ELISA test must be confirmed by a second, more specific test such as an HIV Western Blot.

Epidemiology: The branch of medical science that deals with the study of incidence and distribution and control of a disease in a population.

F

Faith Based Organization: FBO. A single religious group or multiple religious groups including denominations, inclusive of all religions, that provide service and care.

FDA: See Food and Drug Administration.

Food and Drug Administration [FDA]: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services agency responsible for ensuring the safety and effectiveness of all drugs, biologics, vaccines, and medical devices, including those used in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of HIV infection, AIDS, and AIDS-related opportunistic infections.

G

Growth and development: The growth in weight, height, psychosocial and neurologic development that occurs with age.

H

HAART: Stands for Highly Active Antiretroviral Treatment. HAART is defined as treatment with at least three active anti-retroviral medications (ARVs). HAART is often called the drug “cocktail” or triple-therapy. [See also ART]

Health Care Worker: Refers to an individual who cares for patients and includes doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners.

Human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1): The retrovirus isolated and recognized as the cause of AIDS. HIV-1 is classified as a lentivirus in a subgroup of retroviruses. The genetic material of a retrovirus such as HIV is the RNA itself. HIV converts its RNA into DNA and inserts into the host cell's DNA, preventing the host cell from carrying out its natural functions and turning it into an HIV factory.

Human immunodeficiency virus type 2 (HIV-2): A virus closely related to HIV-1 that has also been found to cause AIDS. It was first isolated in West Africa. Although HIV-1 and HIV-2 are similar in their viral structure, modes of transmission, and disease manifestation, HIV-2 is less aggressive than HIV-1 and does not always react to HIV medications in the same way as HIV-1.

I

Immune deficiency: a breakdown or inability of certain parts of the immune system to function, thus making a person susceptible to diseases (“opportunistic infections”) that they would not ordinarily develop. Also known as immunodeficiency.

Immunity: natural or acquired resistance provided by the immune system to a specific disease. Immunity may be partial or complete, specific or nonspecific, long-lasting or temporary.

Immunization: the process of inducing immunity by administering an antigen (vaccine) that is derived from or similar to the infecting agent, in order to allow the immune system to prevent infection or illness when it subsequently encounters the infectious agent.

Informed consent: The process of learning the key facts before intervening in care and treatment or in clinical trials. It is a continuing process to provide information to patients and children and their caregivers.

J, K

L

Lymphocyte: a type of white blood cell produced in the lymphoid organs that are primarily responsible for immune responses. Present in the blood, lymph and lymphoid tissues.

M

N

Non Government Organization: NGO. A group or multiple groups that form a non government related organization to meet specific needs in a community or country. They usually obtain official government recognition and approval although this may not be the case in all countries. Funding often comes from foundations and international organizations.

Nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI): a nucleoside analog antiretroviral drug whose chemical structure is made up of a modified version of a natural nucleoside. These compounds suppress reproduction of retroviruses by interfering with the reverse transcriptase enzyme. Examples include zidovudine, lamivudine, stavudine.

O

Opportunistic infection: an illness caused by an organism that usually does not cause disease in a person with a normal immune system. People with advanced HIV infection suffer from opportunistic infections of the lungs, brain, eyes and other organs.

Orphans and vulnerable children: For purposes of the HIV epidemic, WHO defines an orphan as a child less than 18 years of age who has lost both or one parent to HIV/AIDS. Children who have lost one parent are considered orphans because the remaining parent is often too ill to work or support the family. The term orphan and vulnerable children is used to describe both groups of children and includes both HIV infected and uninfected children.

OVC: See orphans and vulnerable children.

P

PCR (polymerase chain reaction): a sensitive laboratory technique used to detect the amount of HIV RNA in the blood. PCR is used to measure viral load (amount of virus) in persons infected with HIV. It measures the virus itself in contrast to antibody which measures the immune response to the virus.

PEPFAR: (US) President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. 15 billion dollars approved by congress to provide for HIV programs that address treatment, prevention, orphan and palliative care. Limited to certain countries.

PEP: Post exposure prophylaxis. Use of drugs to prevent an infection. In relation to HIV, use of antiretroviral drugs following accidental inoculation of blood or other body fluids from an HIV infected patient or following rape.

PMTCT: Prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV.

Prenatal: Before delivery. Perinatal is the period before and after delivery.

Primary care provider: Refers to a health care professional who provides medical care. A Primary Care Provider can be a medical doctor or physician [MD], a physician's assistant [PA] or a nurse practitioner [NP]. They conduct regular physical exams and take care of health care needs.

Prophylaxis: prevention of infection.

Protease inhibitor: one of a class of anti-HIV drugs designed to inhibit the enzyme protease and interfere with virus replication. Protease inhibitors prevent HIV precursor proteins from dividing into smaller cells of active proteins, a process that normally occurs when HIV reproduces.

Q

Quality of life: The every day feeling or documented quality of living. Measure includes ability to work, think, walk etc.

R

Rapid HIV test: A simplified and inexpensive antibody test for HIV that is used primarily in resource poor countries. The tests results are available on the same day that the test is performed. This test is not useful for testing infants until they have reached 12 to 18 months of age and until breast feeding has ceased for at least 3 months.

Resource poor country: A country with inadequate resources to met normally accepted needs such as health care, education, water, food etc. Also know as developing country.

Retrovirus: HIV and other viruses that carry their genetic material in the form of RNA rather than DNA and have the enzyme, reverse transcriptase, that can transcribe it into DNA. In most animals and plants, DNA is usually made into RNA, hence "retro" is used to indicate the opposite direction.

Reverse transcriptase: the enzyme produced by HIV and other retroviruses that enable them to direct a cell to synthesize DNA from their viral RNA.

S

Standard treatment: A treatment currently in wide use and approved by the FDA, considered to be effective in the treatment of a specific disease or condition.

Standards of care: Treatment regimen or medical management based on state of the art participant care. National Ministries of Health often develop guidelines for standards of care for various diseases.

T

Toxicity: An adverse effect produced by a drug that is detrimental to the participant's health. The level of toxicity associated with a drug will vary depending on the condition which the drug is used to treat.

U

V

Vaccine: a preparation that when injected into an individual stimulates an immune response that can prevent an infection or create resistance to an infection. Some vaccines, such as polio are given by mouth. Vaccine may be either killed or attenuated.

Viral load: Measures the amount of new HIV produced and released into a person's bloodstream.

Virus: a microorganism composed of a piece of genetic material: RNA or DNA: surrounded by a protein coat. To replicate, a virus must infect a cell and direct its cellular machinery to produce new viruses.

W

Western blot: a blood test to detect antibodies to several specific components of a virus such as HIV. This test is most often used to confirm a positive ELISA.

Window period: The 'window period' is period between an exposure and the time it can take to develop antibodies. If you take a HIV test during the "window period" the results may not be a true reflection of your HIV status.

WHO: World Health Organization

X, Y, Z