

## Case Studies for group discussion / role play

### 1 – Discussing U = U with an HIV positive patient

#### Clinician

You are a GP seeing a 52-year old HIV positive gay man who has come to see you about a dry cough he has had for a few days. He is taking HIV therapy but is on no other medication. During the consultation you want to ask him about his HIV treatment and care and raise the issue of U = U

- Think about how to raise U = U in a consultation when he has come to see you about something else
- Think about how to discuss U = U with this patient

#### Patient

You are a 52-year old gay man who has been living with HIV for 8 years. You are taking antiretroviral therapy which is working well for you and you have no side-effects. Your viral load is always undetectable (< 20 copies/ml) and you have a good CD4 count (over 1000). You are seeing your GP because you've had a dry cough, a sore throat and muscle aches and pains for a few days. Your GP may want to discuss how your HIV treatment and care is going.

You don't have a regular partner at the moment and occasionally have sex with casual partners. You've had 4 sexual partners in the last 3 months. You don't usually use condoms and sometimes ask about the HIV status of your partner.

You've heard about U = U from friends but don't know much about it and are quite sceptical and don't really believe it

#### Facilitator notes:

- Encourage participants to think of ways to bring up his HIV care and U=U even though he has come to discuss something else
- Encourage participants to explore how much he knows about U=U, give him the relevant facts and signpost to other sources of information he might want
- Get participants to think about other potentially relevant issues to discuss
  - Do they think his symptoms are related to HIV? This is not going to be the case as he has a very good CD4 count and his symptoms are most likely due to a common viral infection
  - Give him advice about regular testing for STIs as he is having condomless sex with a number of partners



## 2 – Talking about breast feeding

### Clinician

You are a GP seeing a 32 year old HIV positive woman. She is 16 weeks pregnant and is well. She would like to breastfeed her baby and has heard that HIV therapy will prevent transmission to her baby and wants to find out more. She is on HIV therapy

- Think about what advice you would give her about U = U
- Think about what advice you would give her about her pregnancy and breastfeeding

### Patient

You are a 32 year old woman who is 16 weeks pregnant. It is your first pregnancy and everything is going well. You were diagnosed with HIV 4 years ago and have been on treatment since then. Your recent blood tests show that your viral load is undetectable (< 20 copies/ml) and your CD4 count is 870. Your husband is HIV negative and you have been informed about U = U. This is something that encouraged you to conceive. You would really like to breastfeed your baby and want to ask if that is safe because you have an undetectable viral load.

### Facilitator notes:

- Encourage participants to explore how much she knows about U=U, give her the relevant facts and signpost to other sources of information she might want
- Ensure that participants reinforce that U = U does not apply to breastfeeding
- Ensure that participants reassure her that HIV treatment and her undetectable viral load will ensure her baby does not catch HIV
- Encourage participants to explore how she feels about breastfeeding and what she would like to do
- Encourage participants to explain that breastfeeding is not recommended – but that if she wants to breastfeed she will be supported to do this safely
- Ensure participants discuss how breastfeeding can be done as safely as possible if that's what she wants to do
- Advise the patient to discuss further with her HIV clinician and signpost to any relevant resources or sources of information



### 3 – Viral load blips

#### Clinician

You are a nurse working in an HIV clinic. You take a call from a patient who is really worried because his viral load recently came back as 82 copies/ml. You look back through his results and see that all his previous results were undetectable (< 20 copies/ml).

- Think about what extra information you might want to get
- Think about what advice you would give him

#### Patient

You are a 42 year old gay man who was diagnosed HIV positive 6 years ago. You have been on treatment since then and have no problems taking your medication. Your viral load has always been undetectable but the last result came back at 82 copies/ml. You are really worried about this because you don't use condoms with your husband and he is HIV negative. You call the HIV clinic to get some advice

#### Facilitator notes:

- Ensure participants check his adherence and explore if he has any problems taking his medication as prescribed
- Ensure participants check if he has recently started any other medication (including over the counter treatment) that might interact with his HIV therapy
- Encourage participants to explore how much he knows about U=U, give him the relevant facts and signpost to other sources of information he might want
- Ensure participants reassure him that this will be a 'blip' and his viral load is likely to be undetectable again when it is repeated (as his adherence is good)
- Ensure participants reassure him that U = U still applies as is viral load is still < 200 copies/ml and there will be no transmission risk to his husband
- Ensure participants arrange for him to have his viral load repeated to confirm it is undetectable
- Encourage participants to discuss whether he wants to use condoms with his husband until the results of his repeat viral load are known



## 4 – Pre-exposure prophylaxis and disclosure

### Clinician

You are a junior doctor working in a sexual health clinic and see a young HIV positive gay man who is anxious about HIV transmission

- Think about what extra information you need to collect
- Think about what advice you would give him

### Patient

You are a 28 year old gay man who is HIV positive. You were diagnosed 2 years ago and have been on treatment since then. Your viral load has always been undetectable and your CD4 count is over 800. You are otherwise fit and well

You have never heard of U = U.

You have recently started seeing someone and it's starting to get serious. You have been using condoms with him but would like to stop using them. You haven't disclosed your HIV status to your partner and want some advice about how to do that. You also want to ask if the doctor thinks your partner should be on PrEP

### Facilitator notes:

- Ensure participants take a sexual history and identify that he has a new partner with whom he is using condoms – but wants to stop using them
- Encourage participants to explore how much he knows about U=U, give him the relevant facts and signpost to other sources of information he might want
- Ensure participants reassure him that, as his viral load is always undetectable, there is a zero risk of passing on HIV to his partner if they decide to stop using condoms
- Encourage participants to explore how he feels about disclosing his HIV status to his partner
- Encourage participants to discuss with him how he might do this and to offer support / advice for this.
- Ensure participants signpost to other sources of information, advice and support on U=U and disclosure
- Ensure participants give advice about PrEP – his partner does not need PrEP as there is a zero risk of transmission
- Discuss with participants whether a discussion about 'HIV criminalisation' is relevant or required. This may be something the patient is concerned about

## 5 – Planning to start a family

### Clinician

You are a practice nurse seeing a 29 year old HIV positive woman who has come for her smear. She also wants to get some advice about starting a family but she's concerned about transmitting HIV to her partner

- Think about what extra information you might want to collect
- Think about what advice you would give her

### Patient

You are a 29 year old woman who was diagnosed with HIV 3 years ago. You are taking HIV therapy and always have an undetectable viral load. You have come to see the practice nurse to have your annual smear. You have a regular male partner who is HIV negative. He is aware that you are HIV positive. You currently use condoms with him as you are very anxious about transmitting HIV to him. You are both really keen to start a family and want to ask the nurse about this. You have never heard of U = U and don't know what it is. You are likely to be sceptical about it as you are so worried about transmission.

### Facilitator notes:

- Encourage participants to explore how much she knows about U=U, give her the relevant facts and signpost to other sources of information she might want
- Encourage participants to explore with her how she feels about the U=U message and whether or not she believes it
- Encourage participants to think of ways she can be supported to believe the message e.g. other trusted sources of information, sharing the scientific evidence etc
- Ensure that participants reinforce that there is a zero risk of transmitting HIV to her partner as she always has an undetectable viral load and it is safe to start to try and conceive
- Ensure that participants reassure her that HIV treatment and her undetectable viral load will ensure her baby does not catch HIV
- Encourage participants to give her information about U=U and breastfeeding
- Encourage participants to advise her to discuss this with her HIV clinician