

# IN+CARE OC

A NEWSLETTER FOR PROVIDERS SERVING PEOPLE  
LIVING WITH HIV IN ORANGE COUNTY

## The Future of ART

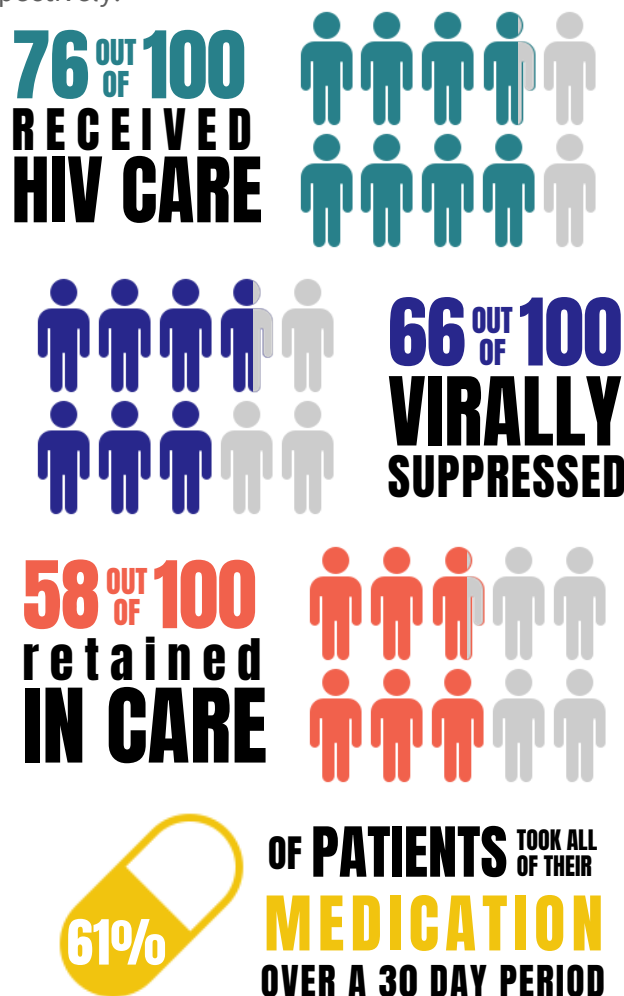
The treatment and care of HIV/AIDS has come a long way since the first diagnosis of AIDS in 1981. What was once considered an untreatable condition with a high mortality rate now has several treatment and prevention options that can suppress HIV and reduce the risk of transmission.

All treatment options consist of antiretroviral therapy (ART). ART is a drug treatment used to block HIV enzymes in affected individuals and allow their immune systems to repair themselves. Originally developed in 1964 as a potential cancer therapy, the drug azidothymidine (AZT) was later included in a trial in the 1980s to identify drugs that might treat HIV/AIDS. It was immediately recognized for its effectiveness in suppressing HIV replication in patients' bodies. AZT was officially repurposed as ART and approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1987.

Many new ART medications have been introduced over the last three decades which are more effective at treating HIV and better tolerated. Starting ART medications immediately after HIV diagnosis is recommended by U.S. Federal Guidelines for the Use of Antiretroviral Agents in Adults and Adolescents with HIV. This allows for immediate response and treatment for HIV upon diagnosis. This strategy also is known as "Rapid ART," "same-day ART," and "treatment upon diagnosis." While the use of ART and Rapid ART has been highly effective and continues to reduce risks associated with infection and transmission, its success is dependent on the person taking their medication daily and staying in care. PLWH that take their ART medication daily as prescribed can achieve and maintain an undetectable

viral load (the amount of HIV in the blood) and will not be able to transmit the virus to others.

As of 2019, the CDC reported that out of 100 PLWH, on average, 78 received some form of HIV care, 58 retained in care, and 66 were virally suppressed.<sup>1</sup> Of those prescribed medications, 61% reported taking all of their doses over a 30 day period.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the most current data available in Orange County (2021) shows that 74.5% and 70.4% of PLWH in Orange County were retained in HIV Care and reached viral load suppression respectively.



<sup>1</sup>CDC HIV Surveillance Supplemental Report 2021;26(2)

## LONG ACTING ANTIRETROVIRALS

Recently a new treatment option has become available for those diagnosed with HIV. In January of 2021, the FDA approved long acting antiretrovirals, also known as injectable ART. Now, rather than taking a daily pill, clients have the option to receive their prescribed ART via an injection. Currently, there is one (1) type of injectable ART available.

Cabenuva, is given once a month or every two (2) months

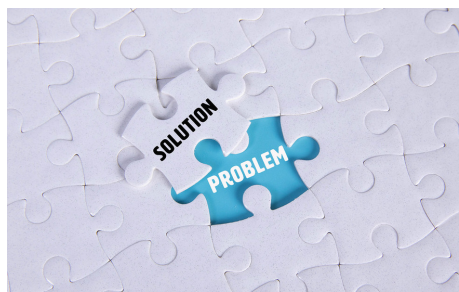
depending on the patient's treatment plan.

Cabenuva eliminates the need to take daily pills and could help individuals who struggle with their current treatment regimens. PLWH who are interested in injectable ART should follow up with their HIV specialist to discuss their treatment options.



## LOOKING FORWARD

For some PLWH, long acting ART can help to improve viral suppression rates and increase overall retention in care. By removing personal barriers such as daily pill regimens, we could see an improvement in adherence to medication which can help PLWH become undetectable and prevent new HIV infections in future years.



### RESOURCES

#### **CDC: HIV Surveillance Supplemental Report 2021**

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/age/viral-suppression.html>

#### **FDA-Approved HIV Medicines | NIH**

<https://hivinfo.nih.gov/understanding-hiv/fact-sheets/fda-approved-hiv-medicines-0>

#### **Antiretroviral Therapy Drug Discovery and Development**

<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/antiretroviral-drug-development#:~:text=In%20March%201987%2C%20AZT%20became,reverse%20transcriptase%20inhibitors%2C%20or%20NRTIs.>

## ORANGE COUNTY HIV QUALITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

This is a project of the Orange County HIV Quality Management Committee and HIV Client Advocacy Committee. The HIV Quality Management Committee works to improve the quality of Ryan White services. If you have feedback or suggestions for future newsletters, please contact Kristin Alix at [KALix@ochca.com](mailto:KALix@ochca.com).

