

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**GILEAD SCIENCES' PULSE SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS MAJORITY OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV, INDIVIDUALS AT RISK AND HIV CARE PRESCRIBERS IN ASIA PACIFIC EXPERIENCE DISRUPTIONS IN HIV CARE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

- First Asia Pacific-wide survey to provide insights into the extent of disruptions and highlights the need for continuity planning to mitigate future potential disruptions

Hong Kong, 30 November 2020 – Gilead Sciences today announced findings from a pulse survey conducted to evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the access and delivery of care in HIV, which includes testing, treatment and prevention, in Asia Pacific. The survey revealed that people living with HIV and individuals at-risk have halted or delayed essential care, such as testing and taking medications, to manage their health during the pandemic. In a region that has more than 5.8 million people living with HIV, 300,000 new infections and about 160,000 AIDS-related mortality, disruptions to HIV care can have serious consequences in terms of HIV transmissions and lead to thousands more deaths.^{1,2} The data collected from this regional survey is therefore significant in providing insights into the current gaps and barriers to care, and actions that can be taken to sustain critical healthcare services for HIV.

The survey results were based on responses from 1,265 respondents across 10 countries and territories in the region, which include 667 people living with HIV (PLHIV), 455 individuals at-risk of HIV and 143 HIV care prescribers. Close to 50% of all respondents reported a disruption in visits to hospitals or point-of-care to receive HIV care, whether for testing, treatment or preventive care. An analysis into the responses found that:

- **COVID-19 pandemic has the biggest impact on the uptake of HIV tests, especially amongst those individuals at-risk.** Close to half (47%) of the individual at-risk respondents reported a decrease in frequency of taking HIV tests during COVID-19. Travel restrictions imposed during the pandemic (35%) and concerns of getting infected with COVID-19 (42%) were the main barriers to actively accessing tests, as HIV tests were mostly only accessible at point-of-care.
- **COVID-19 pandemic also has a substantial impact on the dispensing or uptake of medicines.** About 60% of prescribers reported a decline in preventive prescriptions for at-risk population while about 42% of individual at-risk respondents reported that they had either decreased or stopped taking HIV preventive medicine during COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, about 43% of prescribers also reported a decline in prescribing refill antiretroviral medication to PLHIV. Travel restrictions were also cited as one of the main reasons for the disruption.
- **Long-term ability to access anti-HIV medications is a major concern.** 51% of PLHIV and 44% of individuals at-risk reported that they are concerned about accessing anti-retroviral medicines and prevention medications with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). (2020). UNAIDS Data 2020.

² [UNAIDS, press release, 11 May 2020. The cost of inaction: COVID-19-related service disruptions could cause hundreds of thousands of extra deaths from HIV.](#)

“The COVID-19 pandemic has had serious implications on the delivery of healthcare services in HIV across the region, whether it is in a low or high-income country. Interruptions to access and delivery of care can negatively impact PLHIV and those at-risk of HIV, putting them at a higher risk of health complications,” said **Professor Dr. Adeeba Kamarulzaman, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Malaya & President of the International AIDS Society**. “This survey is an indication of the critical gaps in access to testing, treatment and preventive care and shines a light on areas that can be strengthened, such as the implementation of telehealth to decentralize and reduce the burden on health systems, to prepare for future potential public health emergencies or disruptions.”

Adoption of telehealth for healthcare access and delivery in the future

Telehealth had increasingly become a mode of care delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a majority of prescribers interviewed (72%) expect an increase in telehealth adoption in the future as it offers convenience, improved workflow efficiencies, and allows them to reach more patients and individuals at-risk. About 85% of them used telehealth during the pandemic to consult with patients or individuals at-risk via telephone (60%) or video (32%), and more than half use it to provide refill prescriptions (57%). Conversely, about 34% of PLHIV and individuals at-risk shared that remote access to medications is the most preferred telehealth service, followed by phone (33%) and video (28%) consultations.

“This pulse survey shows that ensuring access to critical HIV care services is an important public health priority especially when an end in sight to the pandemic remains uncertain. Gilead is committed to collaborating with the HIV community from public health authorities to prescribers, patient groups and civil societies across the region to identify strategies that can close the gaps to care to ensure the continuity of vital HIV care services during these challenging times and beyond,” said **Betty Chiang, Vice President of Medical Affairs, International, Gilead Sciences**.

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About the survey

The “Impact of COVID-19 on access and delivery of HIV care in Asia Pacific” was conducted online, from October to mid-November 2020, in 10 countries and territories in Asia Pacific (Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam) by Kantar Health, funded by Gilead Sciences. The survey was disseminated to local medical societies, HIV patient groups and care centers across Asia Pacific. 1,265 respondents, comprising of 667 people living with HIV, 455 individuals at-risk and 143 HIV care prescribers, participated in the survey. The purpose of the survey was to assess the current status as well as gaps and barriers to access to HIV care during COVID-19. The findings provide insights on the impact of COVID-19 to the disruptions of HIV care and inform ways in which health systems as well as HIV community can adapt strategies to maintain the provision of HIV care services and mitigate future disruptions.

About Gilead Sciences, Inc.

Gilead Sciences, Inc. is a research-based biopharmaceutical company that discovers, develops and commercializes innovative medicines in areas of unmet medical need. The company strives to transform and simplify care for people with life-threatening illnesses around the world. Gilead has operations in more than 35 countries worldwide, with headquarters in Foster City, California. For more information on Gilead Sciences, please visit the company’s website at www.gilead.com.



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