



Letter to the editor: The Pundit Speaks
By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.
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"The Truth On Beating AIDS"

According to USA Today, during a World's AIDS event in Washington, President Obama recently declared, "We can beat this disease." Further, he said, "The rate of new infections may be going down elsewhere, but it's not going down here in America," and "There are communities in this country being devastated still by this disease. When new infections among young, Black, gay men increase by nearly 50 percent in three years, we need to do more to show them that their lives matter." With such an alarming increase, what are the responsibilities of the involved individuals? Certainly, most everyone in America knows how AIDS is transmitted. Thus, is it the government's role to control the individual decisions made by consenting adults, even if they make the wrong decisions, which taxpayers then have to cover the enormous cost for their medical care? Reportedly, AIDS has killed over 30 million people worldwide and another 40 million are currently infected with the HIV virus. Apparently, Obama's answer is to throw another \$50 million out there for antiretroviral medicines, distribute 1 million condoms globally and fund 4.7 million voluntary medical male circumcisions in eastern and southern Africa over the next two years. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief focuses on prevention, treatment and support programs in 15 countries hit hardest by the pandemic, 12 of them in Africa. But, how does that help in America? In March of 2011, the United Nations (UN) declared "a moment of truth" with the war on AIDS. Their past anti-AIDS programs has resulted in failures and unsustainable costs. The UN said, "The AIDS epidemic continues to outpace the response." Historically, in 1981, US epidemiologists reported on mysterious cases of fatal pneumonia among young gays and in 1983, French scientists pinned the cause on a new pathogen, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which destroyed the immune system in heterosexuals and homosexuals alike. The UN went on to say, "Each day, more than 7,000 people are newly infected with the virus, including 1,000 children. No country has escaped the devastation of this truly global epidemic." The truth is there is "a wholly unsustainable" rise in costs and a flat lining in resources, which have remained at under 16 billion dollars a year since 2007. The truth is, "More and more people are becoming infected, which means the numbers of patients who need life-long AIDS drugs will increase."

In the America that I love, we will emphasize preventing the virus, rather than treatment for it. We realize most people bring AIDS on themselves. Is it "social justice" to expect others to pay for their mistakes? Is it better to spend our limited funds in Africa or in America? I say, "America first."

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