



Addressing the HIV crisis in the Philippines

We read with interest the Correspondence from Louie Gangcuangco,¹ which paradoxically was published in *The Lancet Public Health* around the same time as the 2019 State of the Union address by President Donald Trump, in which he said, "Together, we will defeat AIDS in America. And beyond."²

The Philippines has a burgeoning epidemic of HIV infection, predominantly within populations of men who have sex with men and among those who inject drugs but, as observed in other countries, epidemics have no sexual or sociological boundaries.³ The Philippines is therefore at a crucial so-called incidence-prevalence window of opportunity, at which interventions now will have maximal impact later. We agree that combination antiretroviral drug therapy should be updated to include integrase inhibitors, as has been provided for other countries through Mylan⁴ and the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).⁵ Perhaps the Government and the health department of the Philippines could negotiate with companies (such as Mylan) to provide tenofovir-lamivudine-dolutegravir instead of lamivudine-tenofovir-efavirenz. Widespread adoption of tenofovir-lamivudine-dolutegravir would help to reduce community viral loads to undetectable and untransmissible levels—this approach could reduce new infections.

In southeast Asia, with the help of USAID and the PEPFAR-funded LINKAGES programme, antiretroviral drugs were provided for almost 16 000 people in 2016.⁵ The strategies laid out in the Correspondence from Gangcuangco should be implemented now, and PEPFAR programmes should expand to include the Philippines.

We declare no competing interests.

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- 1 Gangcuangco LMA. HIV crisis in the Philippines: urgent actions needed. *Lancet Public Health* 2019; 4: e84.
- 2 The White House. Remarks by President Trump in State of the Union address. Feb 5, 2019. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-state-union-address-2/> (accessed Feb 13, 2019).
- 3 Restar A, Nguyen M, Nguyen K, et al. Trends and emerging directions in HIV risk and prevention research in the Philippines: a systematic review of the literature. *PLoS ONE* 2018; 13: e0207663.
- 4 Mylan. Mylan is proud to support International AIDS 2018. July 12, 2018. <http://www.mylan.com/en/news/feature-stories/mylan-sponsors-international-aids-2018> (accessed Feb 13, 2019).
- 5 The United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Partnering to achieve epidemic control in the Asia region. <https://www.pepfar.gov/countries/asiaregion/index.htm> (accessed Feb 13, 2019).