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***If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?***

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## FIRS calls for continued international support to end AIDS epidemic by 2030

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World AIDS Day, held annually on the first day of December each year since 1988, is an opportunity for people around the world to join in the fight, show their support for those living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and commemorate the lives of those who have died. The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS), an organization comprised of the world's leading international respiratory societies working together to improve lung health globally, supports these efforts through research, patient care and advocacy.

Although many important advances have been made in the understanding and treatment of HIV, World AIDS Day serves as an important reminder of the continuing worldwide toll of this disease. The World Health Organization estimates that HIV caused 1.2 million deaths globally in 2014, with 36.9 million people infected overall and 2 million newly infected in 2014. As of March 2015, 15 million people living with HIV were being treated with antiretroviral therapy (ART), up from 13.6 million in June 2014. Patients receiving ART represent just under half of the people living with HIV globally.

"The fight against AIDS is far from over," said American Thoracic Society President Atul Malhotra, MD. "The global response to AIDS has been successful in reducing new HIV infections and HIV-related deaths, but continued investment is needed to address the ongoing devastation caused by this disease. Treatment is increasingly challenging because the disease rapidly progresses when combined with respiratory diseases. As clinicians and researchers, we support the goal of UNAIDS to end the the AIDS epidemic by the year 2030."

The lungs are commonly involved in AIDS, leading to significant morbidity and mortality. Pulmonary manifestations of AIDS may include tuberculosis (TB), *Pneumocystis jiroveci* pneumonia (PCP), bacterial pneumonia, and pulmonary Kaposi sarcoma. Globally, AIDS has led to a resurgence of TB in many low- and middle-income countries. It is estimated that people who are infected with HIV are 26 to 31 times more likely to become sick with TB, which is the leading cause of death among people living with HIV. The WHO's Global Tuberculosis Report 2015 found that the number of TB deaths is now virtually equal to the number of HIV/AIDS deaths globally. Over one in three people living with HIV worldwide are affected, accounting for approximately one in four AIDS-related deaths. *Pneumocystis* pneumonia is another frequent cause of death in AIDS patients. Recent evidence also suggests that HIV infection may be a risk factor for both COPD and pulmonary hypertension.

The death toll for HIV-AIDS is over 34 million people. Members of FIRS call on governments, health care programs, clinicians, public health specialists and non-government organizations to strengthen their responses to the global burden of HIV infection and AIDS by:

- Increasing awareness of the continuing global threat of HIV-related disease.
- Improving the health outcomes of people living with HIV through patient care and research.
- Adequately funding research into improved treatments and treatment strategies
- Reducing the incidence and severity of HIV-related disease by strengthening mother-to-child transmission prevention programs and increasing the early use of antiretroviral therapy.
- Improving HIV education in at-risk communities to reduce the incidence of new HIV infections.
- Reducing HIV-related health disparities and inequities.

These efforts will build on the progress that has been made in reducing AIDS-related death and morbidity.

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Source:

<http://www.thoracic.org/>

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