



VIH + TRAITEMENT = 0 TRANSMISSION

The process of creating a simple message about U=U without saying U=U in Quebec, Canada

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Context

In 2018, community workers reported difficulties explaining the term “undetectable” to help people understand “Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U)”.

Community organizations who are members of COCQ-SIDA asked for the creation of a **clear and assertive message** in French that would help explain U=U, without saying U=U, to :

- people living with HIV (PLWHIV)
- the general population.

Description

Committee The ad hoc committee established in September 2018 (5 members, 5 COCQ-SIDA employees) decided to create a **depersonalized message** about the virus and the treatment, not the person.

Focus groups Of the 20 messages created, 6 variations were selected for testing (content and looks) with two focus groups in June 2019 (N=17). Participants were recruited through newspaper ads in an effort to reach the general public.

Promotional material

- ✓ **1+1=0** t-shirts (July 2019)
- ✓ information sheet (Nov. 2019)
- ✓ zerotransmission.org web page (Nov. 2019)

Evaluation In early 2020, the use of **1+1=0** was assessed among 16 workers of 12 organizations.

The message was finalized in June 2019:



VIH
+ TRAITEMENT EFFICACE

= 0 TRANSMISSION SEXUELLE

zerotransmission.org

Results

- The selected message $1+1=0$ aims to spark curiosity as $1+1$ doesn't equal 0 . The equation is simple: **HIV + Effective treatment = 0 sexual transmission.**
- $1+1=0$ appears to be very effective to explain easily “U=U” to the uninitiated, such as:
 - ✓ health care professionals with limited HIV knowledge
 - ✓ the general public
- Out of the 12 organizations:
 - ✓ 11 use “U=U” message
 - ✓ 3 also use $1+1=0$
 - ✓ 1 didn't know
- Between the creation of the committee and the launch, member groups and PLWHIV became more accepting of the “U=U” (“I=I” in French) message, and the message we developed was slightly difficult for them to integrate. Also, it appears the “mistaken” equation ($1+1=0$) and the similarity between the number “1” and the “I=I” led to a certain confusion among HIV-knowledgeable groups.
- 14 organizations ordered **237 t-shirts** to start conversations during outreach activities



Lessons learned

- ✓ Our message seems to succeed in explaining simply U=U to the general population. PLWHIV seem to understand “U=U” better, possibly since doctors and community organizations worked hard to explain the concept.
- ✓ Message testing with the uninitiated needs to take place in parallel with those more familiar with the subject.
- ✓ A shorter creation process might have encouraged earlier adoption of our message by member organizations. In further messaging, keeping the message even more simple would help with the understanding and its integration in different populations.
- ✓ We will keep using $1+1=0$ to educate some health care professionals and the general public.

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