

Language for HIV Cure

Community-preferred language to describe cases of HIV cure

HIV cure research is building momentum with new advances, with more discussion and debate happening in the community. This document shares the most up-to-date community-preferred terminology related to HIV cure and was reviewed by the global community stakeholders of the Martin Delaney Collaboratories.

DEFINING HIV CURE

Cure

DEFINITION: Removal of all replication-competent virus from the body

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE PHRASES: "Eradication"

AVOID

"sterilizing cure"
"natural cure"

These cases of an HIV cure have all occurred **after a stem-cell transplant** with donor cells naturally immune to HIV.

In presentations, these examples should always be qualified as **a procedure done to treat cancer** rather than an approach under investigation to cure HIV.

EXAMPLE:

Timothy Ray Brown ("The Berlin Patient") The first person to be cured of HIV in 2007. Remained cured with no detectable virus for over 12 years until his death from a reoccurrence of his leukemia in 2020.



EXAMPLE:

Adam Castillejo ("The London Patient") ART was stopped in September 2017. He shows no evidence of detectable intact virus, nor viral rebound. His HIV-specific antibodies have waned.



EXAMPLE:

Marc Franke ("The Düsseldorf Patient") ART was stopped in November 2018. Like the others, he shows no evidence of intact virus in his blood. His HIV-specific antibodies have waned as well.



EXAMPLE:

"The New York Patient" ART was stopped in 2020, and there is no evidence of viral rebound or detectable intact virus. HIV-specific antibodies have waned.



EXAMPLE:

Paul Edmonds ("The City of Hope Patient") ART was stopped in 2021. They cannot find any virus in his blood, and there is no evidence of viral rebound. His HIV-specific cellular immune responses have faded.



EXAMPLE:

Romuald ("The Geneva Patient") ART was stopped in November 2021, after which they could find no replicating HIV in his blood. Unlike the other cases of HIV cure, his donor cells are not naturally resistant to HIV. If HIV is still in his body, his cells could potentially become infected.



Loreen Willenberg
"The San Francisco Patient"



Two women who are "exceptional elite controllers" may also be considered "cured". They have cleared their virus without an intervention, and replication-competent virus cannot be detected using the most sensitive tests. As of now, there is no consensus on terminology for these individuals.



"The
Esperanza
Patient"

Viral Control

DEFINITION: *Undetectable virus off-therapy (outside of a clinical setting) using a standard clinical test, but more sensitive tests can still detect the presence of replication-competent virus.*

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE PHRASES: "Viral control off therapy", "ART-free virologic control", "post-intervention control", "Virologic suppression off therapy" "sustained virologic response"

AVOID
"functional cure"
"remission"

EXAMPLE:

The South African Child: Received early treatment in the CHER trial. Remains off therapy for more than 10 years with an undetectable viral load using standard clinical tests. Small traces of viral DNA in blood plasma were still detectable.



Remission

DEFINITION: *When an individual was thought to have all replication-competent virus removed; however, either viral rebound has already occurred, or there is a reasonable chance rebound may happen.*

EXAMPLE:

The Mississippi Child: Received treatment within 30 hours of birth. ART was interrupted at 18 months, and no virus able to make copies of itself was detected using sensitive tests for 27 months before rebound occurred.



PERSON-CENTERED LANGUAGE

Language matters. Words have power. People first.

Transmission terms for people

"HIV acquisition"

"Acquisition"

"Perinatal", "Vertical" (US
pediatrics only)

Reference terms for people

"Person with HIV"

"Long-term Survivor"

"Lifetime Survivor"

"Volunteer"

"Participant"

"Patient" (only sometimes)

AVOID

"infected"

"HIV-infected"

"subject"