



# PRESS STATEMENT

IMR07/13

19 August 2013

## HIV Drug Resistance in PNG

There is evidence of HIV Drug Resistance in Papua New Guinea (PNG), according to preliminary findings of a study.

The study, HIV-1 Drug Resistance in PNG, was funded by the PNG National AIDS Council and was carried out by researchers at the PNG Institute of Medical Research (IMR) in collaboration with the Burnet Institute in Melbourne, Australia.

“The preliminary findings showed that there are patients failing therapy with evidence of acquired drug resistance (ADR), likely resulting from non-compliance to treatment,” said Janet Gare, one of the principal investigators of the study.

“There is also evidence of transmitted drug resistance (TDR) in newly infected patients who have no exposure to antiretroviral therapy (ART),” Ms Gare said.

Since the introduction of ART in PNG in 2004, a total of 78 health facilities were administering ART to 9435 of the registered HIV patients by end of 2011.

As ART programs expand, the emergence of drug resistance becomes an increasing issue, including both ADR and TDR.

A total of 210 consented people living with HIV (PLHIV), were recruited from ART prescribing sexual health clinics in two towns of high HIV burden provinces in PNG: Mt Hagen and Goroka.

Once recruited, a questionnaire was administered to capture demographic information including time since diagnosis. For patients on ART, treatment history and self-reported ART adherence and clinical histories were also obtained from patient notes. Blood was collected for HIV drug resistance testing, viral load testing and HIV sub typing.

“Of the 210 patients, 107 were not on ART and 103 were on ART. Of those not on ART, one had evidence of TDR” she said.

“For most people on ART, their ART was working to suppress all the virus in the body, of the 16 patients that had viral load, 7 had ADR and reported non-adherence to ART”

“With evidence of HIV drug resistance in PNG, continued education focusing on positive behavioural change relating to treatment adherence together with continual monitoring of drug resistance is therefore necessary to minimize HIV drug resistance in the country,” she added. These preliminary findings were presented to sexual health clinics in the two towns early this month.

A full analysis of the study is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

The study is also the basis of a PhD program for Janet Gare.