

# Immediate, aggressive spending on HIV/AIDS could end epidemic

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Money available to treat HIV/AIDS is sufficient to end the epidemic globally, but only if we act immediately to control the spread of the disease. That was the conclusion of a study just published in the open-access journal, *BMC Public Health*.

This approach defies conventional thinking, which recommends gradual spending over 15-20 years. Canadian Researchers found that an aggressive program over five years is the only way to end the [epidemic](#) given our current resources. The study, part of a supplement on "The OptAIDS project: towards global halting of HIV/AIDS," was based on a leading-edge mathematical model developed by mathematicians and biologists, who recently earned acclaim for a study on how best to handle a planetary invasion by zombies.

Professor Robert J. Smith? and his team from the University of Ottawa, as well as researchers from York University and the University of Manitoba, developed the mathematical model to examine how best to eliminate HIV/AIDS worldwide, given the large amounts of money that have been committed to fighting the disease. They found that the \$60 billion currently committed to fighting HIV/AIDS might suffice to end the epidemic globally. However, spending this money over the proposed 15-20 years will almost certainly fail, given the ability of HIV/AIDS to spread through travel and migration.

Recent scientific advances combined with education campaigns and condoms have been very effective in reducing the incidence of the

disease in many countries and regions. However, the incidence of infection is still on the rise in many countries too. Over an extended timeframe of 15-20 years, travel and immigration will make it impossible to contain the disease to these regions. As a result, they predict that the spread of the disease will continue to outpace treatment.

This breakthrough finding was the culmination of numerous international studies looking at how epidemics spread globally, the infrastructure required to contain epidemics, how different countries are managing the disease, and the resources required to manage the HIV/AIDS epidemic, under the OptAIDS project umbrella.

"The OptAIDS project grew out of a frustration with existing attempts to tackle the disease," says Professor Smith? "HIV/AIDS is mostly addressed at a community or national level, when it needs to be tackled globally."

The team is now working to develop a model for how best to spend existing resources in the developing world to contain the disease before it spreads beyond our reach.

More information: The OptAIDS project: towards global halting of [HIV/AIDS](#), Research and reviews Supplement editor: Robert Smith? [BMC Public Health](#) (in press), [www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth/](http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth/)

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