

Dear Elected Representative,

I am writing in support of [INSERT SPECIFIC REQUEST] for the cure, treatment, and prevention of Herpes Simplex Virus, Types 1 and 2 in America. Public funds are critically needed at NIH, CDC, HRSA, and other DHHS partner agencies specifically for advancement of this work. The landscape for HSV in this country is dire, there have been no advances in 40 years, and more federal action is needed urgently.

Herpes Simplex Virus is not benign. Although mostly associated with symptomatic episodes of either oral or genital lesions, HSV is also a neuropathic, chronic infection that lives in the peripheral and central nervous system. While most cases are self-limited, there is risk for severe disease, especially in the immunocompromised. Additionally, as neuroinflammation is possible, HSV is associated with a number of neurological complications, and is being studied for association with Alzheimer's Disease.

HSV is also a widely recognized driver of the HIV epidemic and approximately 40% of HIV cases are HSV-related. HSV also kills approximately 1,000 infants annually as a result of neonatal herpes which is currently not a reportable condition.

Prevalence of HSV is shockingly high, yet most HSV+ are private about their condition, or in the closet, due to the heavy social stigma. HSV-1 impacts 1 in 3 Americans. HSV-2 impacts 1 in 6. Also, like many health disparities, it impacts minorities and LGBTQ populations at higher rates - nearly half of Black women in our country have genital herpes. More than 70% of Mexican Americans have HSV-1. There are nearly half a million new cases of HSV in America every year.

The current treatment for HSV was invented nearly 40 years ago and is only 50% effective. There almost nothing in the pipeline for clinical trials for vaccine or treatment. NIH has indicated HSV is a priority – yet little progress is being made. There is no accurate diagnostic test for diagnosing asymptomatic infection, and without accurate testing, the virus is spreads (most often from those unaware of their HSV+ status) with no prevention whatsoever.

American's deserve better. Please let me know if we can meet to discuss this critical public health issue.

Sincerely,