



Celebrities Join Call for Generic Version of “Groundbreaking” HIV Med

A letter urges Gilead Sciences to allow generic versions of long-acting Sunlenca (lenacapavir) to reach developing countries.

May 30, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

More than 300 world leaders, scientists, activists, celebrities and people living with [HIV](#) are calling for pharmaceutical giant [Gilead Sciences](#) to allow cheap generic versions of its long-acting HIV med Sunlenca (lenacapavir) to extend its reach to people with multidrug-resistant HIV in developing countries, according to [The Guardian](#).

When used to treat HIV, Sunlenca is given as an injection twice a year. It has been available in the United States since December 2022 and is indicated for heavily treatment-experienced people with multidrug-resistant virus. Sunlenca for HIV treatment must be combined with other antiretrovirals and, to date, there are no others that can be taken at such a long interval. For more, see “[FDA Approves Twice-Yearly Sunlenca for People With Drug Resistant HIV](#).” Current trials are exploring the med’s use as part of combination regimens for first-time treatment and alone as twice-yearly pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent HIV.

BREAKING: 300+ world leaders, scientists, people living with HIV, artists and activists urge [@GileadSciences](#) to share new lifesaving [#HIV](#) medicine with low- and middle-income countries.

Read the letter <https://t.co/Y4C7rkuzyL#GileadForGood>
pic.twitter.com/h2KkNOJzAI

— The People’s Medicines Alliance (@peoplesmeds) [May 30, 2024](#)

[In a letter](#) addressed to Daniel O’Day, CEO of Gilead Sciences, advocates applauded the company for its work in developing [lenacapavir](#), saying it “could be a real game changer worldwide for people most excluded from high-quality health care.”

“We urge Gilead to ensure that people in the Global South living with or at risk of HIV can access this groundbreaking medicine at the same time as people in the Global North can,” the letter reads.

The 300 signatories of the letter include Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) executive director Winnie Byanyima, Nobel Prize-winning scientist Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, former president of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and such celebrities as Gillian Anderson, Sharon Stone and Alan Cumming.

Five ongoing trials are underway to test lenacapavir as [pre-exposure prophylaxis \(PrEP\)](#) in diverse populations at risk for HIV. If found to be effective for [preventing HIV](#) acquisition, lenacapavir [could become the longest-acting PrEP option](#).

Lenacapavir remains out of reach for many throughout the world due to its price and limited availability.

The med is currently available in [only a handful of wealthy countries](#), such as the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Israel and Japan. In the United States, lenacapavir is listed at \$42,250 for the first year of treatment and \$39,000 for subsequent years, according to The Guardian.

Organized by the [People’s Medicines Alliance](#), the letter calls for Gilead to license cheaper generic versions of lenacapavir that would benefit millions of people living in low- and middle-income countries.

“The Global South is home to most of the people who could benefit from lenacapavir,” states the letter to Gilead. “Currently, across Asia, Africa and Latin America, around 1 million people become infected with HIV every year; imagine if we could prevent all these people from becoming infected, and thereby change their lives, delivering them from a lifetime of treatment and medical care. People who have been marginalized could especially benefit. A twice a year injection could be a radically positive change for people facing stigma, for young women fighting to take control of their own bodies, for LGBTQ people facing criminalization and discrimination, for sex workers, and for people who inject drugs.”

In 2022, two thirds of the 39 million people with HIV were living in Africa, according to the [World](#)

[Health Organization](#). What's more, in 2022, the continent accounted for 380,000 of the 630,000 AIDS-related deaths worldwide.

By sharing the technology with the whole of the Global South, you will help save lives, prevent HIV infections, and advance the end of the world's deadliest pandemic. You can shape history," the letter reads.

To learn more, click [#Lenacapavir](#) and [#Sunlenca](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[Gilead Is Studying Lenacapavir as Twice-Yearly PrEP](#)," "[Sunlenca Remains Active Against Drug-Resistant HIV](#)" and "[Innovative Use of Long-Acting Injectables Holds Promise for People with Adherence Challenges](#)."

For more on [HIV prevention](#), read POZ's [2024 HIV Prevention Drug Chart](#) that compares prevention options and includes adult dosing information.

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