

# *Cuba Steps Up Efforts in Fight Against HIV/AIDS*

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Havana, June 8 (RHC-Xinhua)-- Cuban scientists are continuing efforts to provide anti-retroviral medicines to those suffering from HIV/AIDS, with 81 percent of patients now being treated, the Ministry of Health said on Wednesday.

Maria Isela Lantero, head of the Health Ministry's HIV/AIDS department, was quoted by local media as saying that scientists were testing the TERA-VAC-VIH to reduce patients' viral load and to improve their quality of life.

The specialist said that most sufferers in Cuba are over 30 years of age and that 80 percent of them are men. Lantero added that efforts are being made to ensure anti-retroviral drugs would reach at least 90 percent of those affected.

"Each year, the number of people living with HIV and receiving treatment grows. In previous years, whenever we had problems with the supply, we always had alternatives to prevent treatment from being interrupted," Lantero told *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper.

Currently, Cuba provides HIV patients with a combined treatment of five Cuban-made anti-retroviral drugs with other imported medication, which have been certified by the World Health Organization.

The aim is to keep levels of the virus in the blood low, while controlling their growth. This allows to keep the patient from presenting any health complications, although HIV remains incurable for the moment.

Lantero said when this treatment is successful, the patients' viral load dwindles down to become almost completely undetectable.

In 2015, the World Health Organization recognized Cuba as the first country in the world to have eradicated the mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

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