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**Interview with Jennifer Kates
Kaiser Family Foundation
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JACKIE JUDD: Jen Kates, thank you. The foundation released a really unique report recently comparing the U.S.' response to the HIV epidemic to seven other develop nations: Australia, Canada, France, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and The UK. Why was it done?

JENNIFER KATES: Well, we want to do this report for two main reasons. One is we're having this star conference here coming back to the U.S. We wanted to reflect a little bit. Also, you can't really understand something unless you put in a context. We thought we'd help understand the U.S.' response to the epidemic by comparing it to others that, you might think of it as its peers. Were they similar? Were they different?

JACKIE JUDD: One of the things you looked at was how similar or different are the epidemics.

JENNIFER KATES: Right. Right.

JACKIE JUDD: What did you find?

JENNIFER KATES: We found in general that there's a lot of similarities. The different countries have different populations, obviously. There's certain subgroups that'd get affected and some that wouldn't be than others, but in general, they have concentrated epidemics meaning that they have relatively low prevalence overall.

Concentrated epidemics in pockets, they all have had lots of high rates of infection in the 80s that really went

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down. Interestingly now, they're facing some similar problems. For example, many of them all have this resurgence of epidemic among gay and bisexual men. That was one thing.

JACKIE JUDD: You also found a similarity in that there was a great prevention success in every one of the countries you looked at?

JENNIFER KATES: Right.

JACKIE JUDD: Mother and child transmissions?

JENNIFER KATES: Yes. We found some really common successes too. All these countries have virtually eliminated mother and child transmission of HIV. There may be a few transmissions each year, but really, it has been a quite success story across all eight of these countries. The U.S. included. Right.

JACKIE JUDD: On the negative side, a more troubling side, I guess, is the commonality of the so called treatment cascade.

JENNIFER KATES: Yes. That was also something we noticed. In addition to the problem that I mentioned earlier around the resurgence of the epidemic among gay and bisexual men and rising infections, there's some other persistent common challenges. One is this idea of a treatment cascade that challenges all of them face in getting people to know their status and then once they know their status getting them into care, keeping them in care and getting them on treatment so

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that they can actually be virally suppressed. All of them are struggling at the same time.

JACKIE JUDD: You started this saying one of the reasons the report was done was to understand the U.S.' response in a broader context.

JENNIFER KATES: Right.

JACKIE JUDD: What did you come away learning about the U.S. that may be you didn't start knowing?

JENNIFER KATES: Yes, what I came away learning that I didn't know was how in some ways the U.S. was much more similar to some of these countries than I had thought. The challenges that it went through and the phases were similar, but also there were some real differences. Some of those differences reflect the difference in our political systems and the way our healthcare is organized. One, for example being, the U.S. is the only country that doesn't have universal health coverage. That played a significant role in what happened with our epidemic and where we are today.

We also noticed that the U.S. was a leader in many ways; scientific research; the community activism; and really new models for how we approached disease. At the same time, it was a lagger. It was the last of the eight to have a National AIDS Strategy. It was the last of the eight to lift an entry ban for people that are positive. It's kind of a mixed story for the U.S.

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JACKIE JUDD: The final question is you end the report or the summary saying all of these nations including the U.S. are at a pivotal moment in the epidemic. In what way?

JENNIFER KATES: Well, as we're hearing at this conference, we can have an AIDS-free generation. We have the tools to actually, if we implement them, we can actually turn the future to something that doesn't have to be what we have today, but what was that going to take?

I think each of these countries have to grapple with what does that really mean; what do they have to do differently; and resources they have manage to reach that goal. I don't know if they're all there yet.

JACKIE JUDD: Okay. Thank you so much.

JENNIFER KATES: Thank you.

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