

The Impact of World Health Organisation HTLV-1 Open Letter

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Human T Leukemia Virus type 1 (HTLV-1) was discovered in 1980 by Robert Gallo, but people have been suffering from HTLV-1 diseases for thousands of years. However, public health measures are rarely implemented to prevent its transmission. As a result patient representatives, scientists and clinicians submitted the WHO HTLV-1 Open Letter to Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director general of the World Health Organisation (WHO) to adopt HTLV as a WHO health topic, in order to work towards the eradication of HTLV-1, and to provide information, guidance and technical support to countries and communities, particularly to those most affected by its diseases.

This action resulted in a process of engaging with WHO member-states and WHO, prompting awareness that despite the significant morbidity and mortality caused by HTLV-1, many people worldwide still believe that HTLV-1 is a harmless virus. We know that about 1000 people die every year of Adult T cell Leukemia (ATL) in Japan alone. Now is the time to rephrase the problem at hand: Just as anal, cervical, vulval, penile and laryngeal cancers are caused through the acquisition of the oncovirus human papilloma virus, can we catch Adult T cell Leukemia (ATL) or HTLV-1 associated myelopathy (HAM) through HTLV-1 transmission?

Fabiola will provide an overview of the HTLV-1 and HTLV-1 diseases and the impact of the WHO HTLV-1 Open Letter