A drug resistance surveillance system is vital for any country providing antiretroviral therapy.

It will ensure the information to develop and maintain effective strategies for antiretroviral (ARV) use. WHO’s Global HIV Drug Resistance Surveillance Network will produce the evidence to guide national and international ARV treatment plans, and other measures to sustain the effectiveness of ARV programmes.

Highly effective AIDS therapy has remarkably reduced HIV-related mortality in settings where it is available and correctly used.

However, the emergence of resistance to ARV drugs challenges this achievement. Transmission of HIV resistant strains is occurring and could threaten the effectiveness of drugs among newly infected patients.

**HIV drug resistance will evolve naturally.** Unless resistance is monitored on a regular basis, remedial action to contain resistance cannot be taken. Evidence-based strategies to help preserve the effectiveness of ARV include rational use of ARV, uninterrupted drug supplies and surveillance linked with programmatic monitoring.

The WHO global surveillance network will provide the data for evidence-based responses.

Monitoring HIV drug resistance will enable WHO to track global trends in HIV drug resistance and make rational choices in containment activities where needed in areas with increasing rates or high prevalence of drug resistance.

**WHO’s existing worldwide networks**, such as the influenza outbreak surveillance network and the multidrug resistant TB surveillance system, have become invaluable public health tools. The HIV network will as well.

Based on these proven systems – and in collaboration with international partners, countries and WHO regional offices – the WHO Global HIV Drug Resistance Surveillance Network will link existing facilities to those countries where facilities are inadequate, and where ARVs will soon be more widely available.

**WHO’s Global HIV Drug Resistance Surveillance Network:**

- develops standards for detecting resistance and identifying the factors which lead to resistance;
- builds and maintains monitoring capacity in developing countries through technology transfer, training and technical assistance;
- monitors resistance in untreated patients and in samples of selected treated patients;
- disseminates data for evidence-based containment strategies.

Ensuring these life-extending drugs remain effective requires constant vigilance.

*For further information, please see: [www.who.int/emc.amrhiv.htm](http://www.who.int/emc.amrhiv.htm) or contact: amr@who.int*