

# MISSION POSSIBLE!

3 months of "Absolute Safe Sex" for all MSM can stop the HIV epidemic in the gay community. Switzerland tested this hypothesis with a project called MISSION POSSIBLE.



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## Issues

In Switzerland the number of new infections among MSM has increased continuously since 2003. The Federal Office of Public Health has developed a model able to stop this epidemic (see poster THPE0359 "Three Months of Absolute Safer Sex" exhibited on Thursday in hall D). The model is based on the hypothesis that individuals

with primary HIV infection (PHI) who have unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) within networks of familiar sex partners are driving this epidemic. Evidence for this hypothesis are research findings showing that about 50% of HIV positive MSM got infected by a partner with PHI. In order to verify this hypothesis, the Swiss Aids Federation (SAF) launched the "MISSION POSSIBLE" campaign (MP).

## Goals of MP

MP's goal was to motivate all MSM in Switzerland to practice safer sex strictly for three months and at the same time to avoid new PHI. MSM who want to have UAI after these three months should first take a HIV

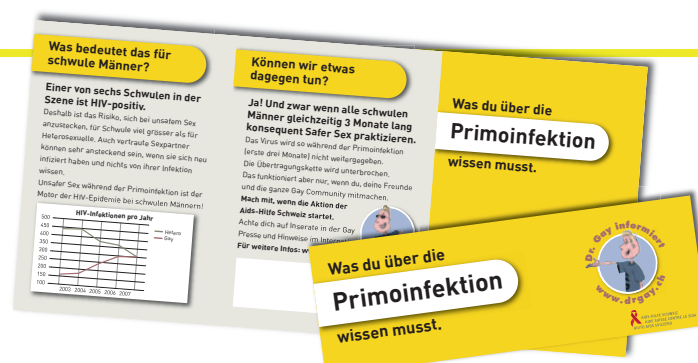
test and receive counselling about negotiated safety and correct risk management. We expect a significant drop of recent infections among MSM with a new HIV diagnosis this year. MP was carried out in 3 steps.

## Step 1:

### All you need to know about PHI

(November 07 to January 08)

MSM were informed about PHI and its implication in HIV transmission. A collective action of "3 Months of Absolute Safe Sex" was announced. The gay community was motivated to commit itself to this mission. Brochures and internet were used.



## Step 2: Join the mission!

(February 1st to Mai 1st 08)

MSM were encouraged to participate in the collective action "3 MONTHS ABSOLUTELY SAFE". The action was promoted by a massive campaign involving personal communication and all media in all places where MSM meet. Free condoms with MP-design were distributed to all visitors of bathhouses, darkrooms and sex clubs.



## Step 3: I want to know now!

(May 1st to May 31 08)

Promotion of VCT and negotiated safety. Participants of MP were offered a free voucher for a VCT-appointment in a test center specialized for gay men. After 3 months of safer sex it was the perfect time for those who wanted to have UAI with their stable partners.

## Lessons learned

It is difficult to explain the meaning of a collective safer sex action of 3 months to MSM because prevention messages stay the same for the individual after these 3 months.

## Next steps

MSM are educated after MP to recognize signs of PHI, to have more efficient preventive strategies and to practice negotiated safety. A formal evaluation of MP is going on and will be presented in 2009.