

Estimating the rate of HIV transmission from men on treatment

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Background

Rate of HIV transmission from infected persons to their uninfected partners is related to plasma viral load.

HIV treatment can reduce plasma viral load to undetectable levels.

According to The Swiss Federal Commission for HIV/AIDS: effectively no risk of sexual transmission from patients on treatment with undetectable viral loads in the last six months (The Swiss Statement)

However, this rate of transmission is not known and unlikely to be zero.

Aim of current mathematical model:

What is the rate of HIV transmission from men who have sex with men (MSM) in the Netherlands?

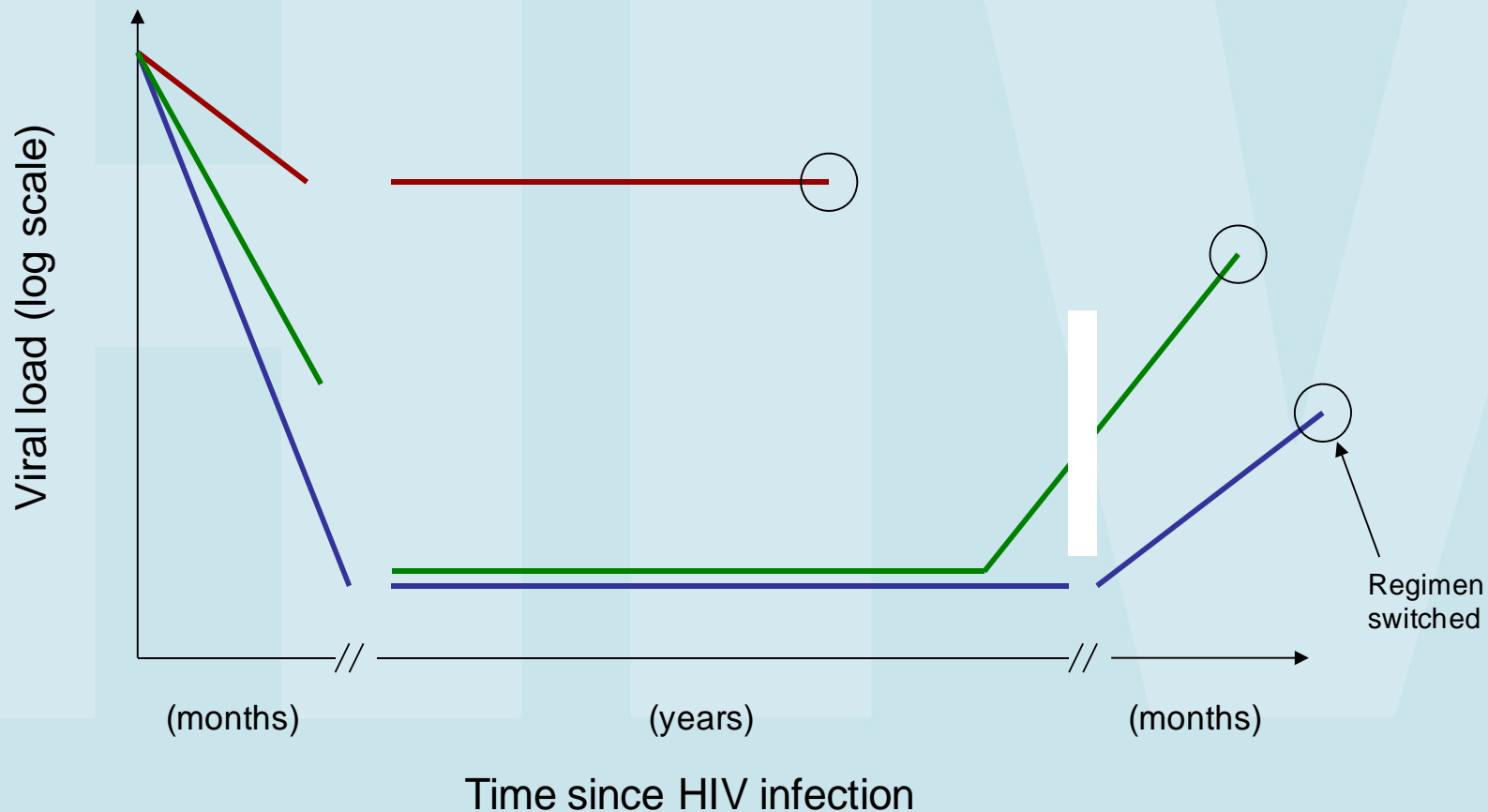
How is this influenced by:

- Patterns of condom use?
- Schedules of viral load monitoring?

Stochastic mathematical model: individual-based simulation of viral load during first line treatment, HIV transmission and patient monitoring

(Hallett, PLoS Med; Smit PLoS One)

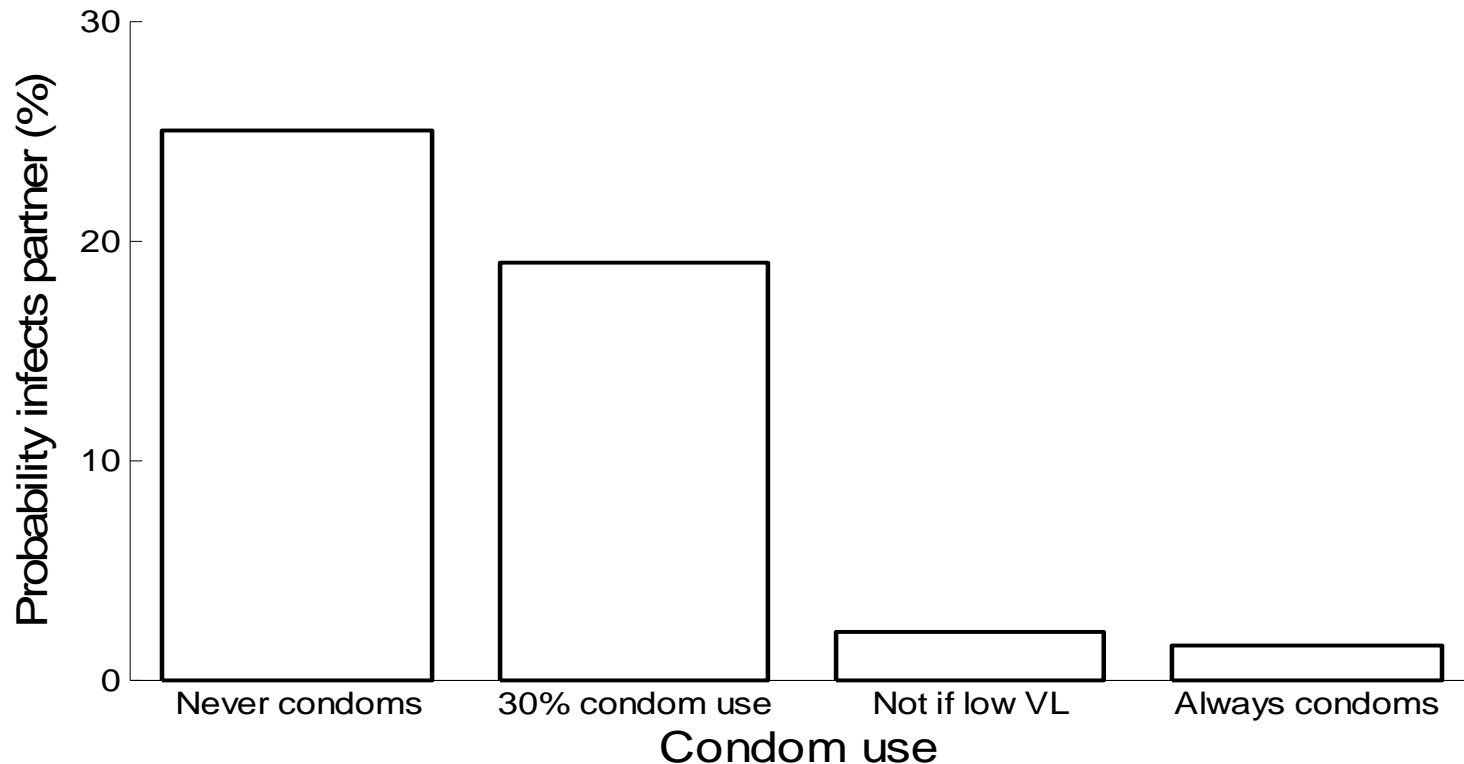
Schematic representation of the three assumed trajectories of viral load



**Suppression achieved and good adherence (blue line);
Suppression achieved but poor adherence (green line); and,
Suppression not achieved (red line). The circles indicate when the regimen is switched.**

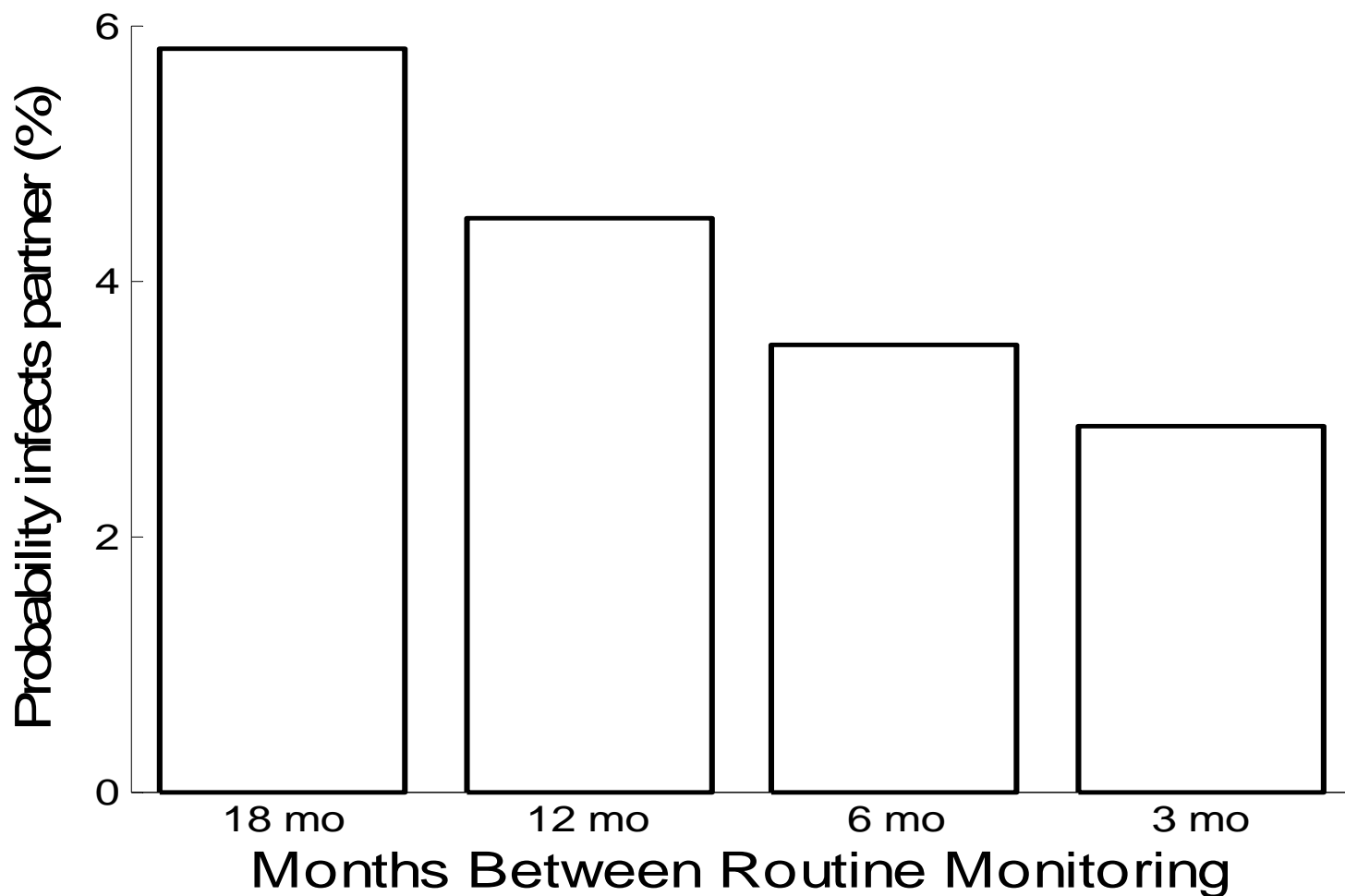
- Risk of transmission: the probability that an individual on treatment will infect his uninfected sexual partner during treatment.
- Functional relationship between plasma viral load and transmission in each sex act based on Hill distribution (*Fraser, 2007*)
Rescaled to match the risk per sex act for MSM (*Wilson, 2008*)
- Assumed 100 sex acts per year
- Scenarios for condom use:
 - Never using condoms
 - Using condoms in 30% of sex acts
 - No condom use if viral load measurement in last 6 months was undetectable
 - Always using condoms

Probability of HIV transmission during first line therapy



- (1) condoms are never used;
- (2) condoms are used 30% of the time;
- (3) condoms are used unless last viral load measurement in last 6 months was undetectable;
- (4) condoms are always used.

Frequency of viral load measurements on the probability of HIV transmission



- Earlier modeling work and the Swiss statement did not consider the way in which deciding not to use condoms could be conditional on the last viral load measurement.
- There was also little focus on estimating the rate of HIV transmission or exploring how it is influenced by patterns of patient monitoring

Key message to patients:

- A small rate of transmission will translate into a large number of new infections.
- Condom use best way to protect partner
- Second best strategy is to stress condom use when last viral load is more than 3 months ago.

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