

Jemma Alarcón: I'm going to tell you a story about someone that should be alive today. Where I live and work and many people consider paradise. He was young. He traveled. He hang out with his friends. He like one in three people in the US with the HIV, did not. Before the global outbreak began in May of 2022, we knew of a few things about Mpox. We knew it was related to smallpox, another pox virus. That it causes Mpox disease. We knew it was a zoonotic virus able to be transmitted between Anhalt Trades, Dormus and other animals. Its natural reservoir is not known. Given its relationship to smallpox, we can use interventions initially developed against it to treat and prevent and Mpox. The Tecovirimat, an antiretroviral initially developed against smallpox disease, can also be used for people at high risk of severe Mpox. Historically, only the countries highlighted in blue were known to have endemic Mpox disease, all of them in the continent of Africa, including Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the separate Republic of the Congo. After the global pandemic began in May of 2022, we began to see a pattern. Mpox was disproportionately affecting one of the most vulnerable communities in the US. Among people with Mpox, 4 in 10 had HIV. And over half either had HIV or a recent STI. Mpox in the US disproportionately affects the LGBTQ plus community, in particular Latin X and black men that have sex with men. The delivery of the vaccines during large outbreaks can be challenging, and intentional avoidance of stigma continues to play a role in public health interventions. This is a picture taken in Los Angeles of people waiting in line to receive the Genius vaccine. Some individuals were concerned. Also, there were not enough vaccines to go around. The vaccination route changed from subcutaneous to intradermal. Lower doses could be used, but the injection site was rather visible. And it was not known if the vaccine would work as well. Now we know that it is working. To address some of the concerns in regard to the location and people preferences, the genius vaccine can now be given in different locations. All states across the US have reported Mpox cases around the world. Over 87,000 cases have been reported to date. The Mpox strain, initially called Monkeypox, was renamed by WHO, in an effort to resist the stigma, reduce the stigma of the name. Most prevalent during this outbreaks, clade 2B was initially thought to cause mild disease. This article from last year noted that children and people with underlying immune deficiencies may have more severe cases, but Mpox is rarely fatal. While one strain found in central Africa can kill up to 10% of infected individuals, there have been no confirmed deaths reported outside Africa during the current outbreak. Four months after The WHO declared the global outbreak. The LA Department, the LA County Department of Public Health received their report that a person was Mpox was hospitalized and died due to Mpox disease. We spoke with his family on the coroner and asked if an autopsy could be performed in order to further understand why he died. The deceased body was intercepted right before embalming began. Doctor Alexander Langmuir, the founder of EIS, knew some local jurisdictions would be leery to invite the federal government to intervene when pandemics happened. As he hoped, field officers would be ready. We were already there. The person had Mpox lesions throughout his body. Coalescing lesions are noted in his thumb. HIV experts now suggest that such lesions can be used or considered as an AIDS defining condition. He spent about 30 days in the hospital. He initially presented because he couldn't eat. The ulcers in his mouth made it too painful. Ulcers could be seen throughout his gastrointestinal system. He had such severe inflammation of his of his large bowel that he basically developed a large bowel obstruction. He was constipated and unable to eat throughout his hospital stay. General surgeons would be surprised to know that the inflammation was so severe in the lower part of his colon, that he developed the large bowel obstruction, which is usually treated with surgery. Because he had AIDS, which in the US, in the era of highly effective antiretroviral therapy, nobody should have. We learned that disseminated Mpox can be found in the brain and the bone marrow as well. We also learned that combining poor absorption of oral Tecovirimat. And an immune system compromised due to AIDS. The Mpox virus can develop mutations that may lead to resistance. In this case it did to Tecovirimat. He did not receive intravenous Tecovirimat. He was not vaccinated. He was a young African American male with AIDS. A majority of patients that are hospitalized due to Mpox come in because of pain. Studies show that if you are female or a person of color, your pain may be under or completely untreated while you're in the hospital. We now know that severe Mpox, especially about among people with AIDS, is of concern and that aggressive treatment is warranted. Soon after

he died, the CDC sent the nationwide alert to notify physicians and public health staff of the newer assistance findings available therapies. In response to this preventable death, the LA County Department of Public Health developed a surveillance system to monitor patients that are hospitalized due to Mpox. The goals were to offer clinical guidance and prompt consultation with the CDC Mpox clinical team and implement warm handoffs with the public health staff. And the clinic staff actually pick up the phone and talk to each other to reconnect people living with HIV to care. He experienced a month of Constipation in the hospital. He couldn't eat or sleep. The Mpox lesions affected not only how he looked, but his ability to sleep to work. The next question we should be asking is. Why did he die? Disseminated Mpox was the proximal cause of death. Health inequity was the root cause. A 2020 Kaiser Family Foundation survey among black Americans noted that six in ten reported race-based discrimination in the past year. This person with African American. Could his death have been prevented? Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Prep is a pill that you can take once a day to prevent transmission of HIV. Although black and Latinos account for the majority of people for whom Prep is recommended, they have the lowest rates of Prep use among all racial and ethnic groups. Only one in 10 people that could benefit from Prep receive it. This number is significantly higher if you're white. We're six out of 10 people that could benefit from Prep do. This is of particular concern given that in 2019, four out of every 10 people diagnosed with HIV in the US were black. You're also less likely to have HIV under control if you're black. If your HIV is undetectable, you're less likely to have opportunistic infections. Your immune system can fight back. Today, treating HIV takes 1 pill a day. This young African American male with AIDS died due to disseminated Mpox. This was a preventable death. As of today, 42 people have been reported to have died due to Mpox in the US. A majority of a majority of them were black. Young gay men living with AIDS. AIDS is preventable. Transmission of HIV is preventable. People's lives can be saved if they receive treatment. A few months after this young person died, I was called to a different morgue. This time. She identified as trans. She had experienced homelessness. She was also young. She was also African American. She also had AIDS. I chose this image because it shows impermanence, the fragility of life. But it also shows pollination and growth. We have the tools, the knowledge, and the compassion to change our current reality. To address or perhaps even eliminate. The racism, the discrimination, the biases that lead to some people receiving the treatment they need and others having uncontrolled HIV and dying in such tragic and painful ways. Let's work for our world. Where he doesn't die and stories like these don't have to be shared.