

# **Masters Research Report**

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**Title:  
Media for Development: News Media Coverage of Women's  
Health within the realm of Prevention of Mother-to-Child  
Transmission of HIV (PMTCT) in South Africa.**

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## NO-FRILLS, NO-HOLDS-BARRED GUIDE TO LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

Nicola Spurr asks if it is morally responsible for HIV-positive women to become pregnant deliberately

### Is childbirth an absolute right?

About one-third of HIV-positive women will transmit the virus to their infants during pregnancy, if untreated. So, should HIV-positive women deliberately get pregnant? And if so, will they be held accountable if they pass the virus on to their children?

### Nevirapine faces axe as sole treatment

Fears that Aids drug poses health risk to newborn babies

### Life is a marathon for this gutsy rape survivor

### How to prevent

### HIV after rape

### The science behind the drug

Nevirapine is provided for two reasons:

- For treatment, as part of an antiretroviral (ARV) package of three drugs; or
- For prevention of HIV, especially prevention of mother-to-child infection.

When given as part of a treatment package, it is only given to people with a CD4 count of less than 200 cells a mm<sup>3</sup>. When given as prevention, it is given to all HIV-infected women — regardless of their CD4 count — and their babies, to prevent infection in their babies.

Women who are pregnant and need triple ARV therapy (a CD4 count of less than 200) should be offered an ARV package of three drugs, which both treat the mother and prevent infection in the baby.

For women who are pregnant and HIV-infected with a CD4 count of more than 200, the current thinking is to prevent infection with ARV drugs, caesarean sections, formula feeding and other interventions.

When a woman's CD4 count has fallen, she should be offered triple ARV therapy. This can be any time from six weeks after delivery to 10 years or more.

ARV therapy is given — as opposed to mono or dual therapy — for treatment to prevent drug resistance. It works well, and has reduced tuberculosis rates and deaths from TB, other opportunistic infections, and prevented death by AIDS in many people.

#### How is HIV transmitted?

Through blood (including menstrual blood); semen; vaginal secretions; and, breast milk. Blood contains the highest concentration of the virus, followed by semen, vaginal fluids, and then breast milk.

Despite new doubts about the drug, it has saved the lives of thousands of babies in South Africa, writes **Natalya Dinat**

### Curing nevirapine confusion

The Aids drug Nevirapine is unlikely to be offered as a single drug to pregnant HIV-positive mothers.