

World Health Organization



Raising awareness regarding the spread of HIV among the youth

-Research Report-

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1. Introduction


The Human immunodeficiency virus, short HIV, is a disease that affects more than 38 million people on this planet, and there are new infections every day. The virus targets immune cells and damages them, which leads to a weakened immune system and its ability to fight infections. Affected individuals become more and more immunodeficient.

The acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, short AIDS, is its most developed stage, which is marked by the development of infections, different kinds of cancer or other long-term clinical diseases. Three to six weeks after the infection, the incubation period is over and different symptoms, such as fever, tiredness, heavy night sweats, joint pain, skin rashes or oral ulcerations start to develop. Those symptoms show many similarities to influenza infection, which is why an acute HIV infection usually remains undetected. However, an early diagnosis can prevent infecting other sexual partners as well as enhance the HIV-specific immune response of patients. The transmission of HIV occurs through the exchange of different kinds of body fluids from infected individuals, such as blood, breast milk, semen, and vaginal secretions. Fortunately, infection through contact such as hugging, kissing, shaking hands, or sharing food or water is not possible.

84.2 million people have been infected since the beginning of the epidemic and 40.1 million people have died of HIV. The African Regions remain most affected, with nearly 1 in every 25 adults living with HIV and accounting for more than two-thirds of the people living with HIV worldwide. In 2019, two out of seven HIV infections occurred among young adults (15-24 years). This shows that additional efforts need to be made to raise awareness, especially among the youth, as it is of utmost relevance to find a way to stop or at least reduce further infections.

Summary of the global HIV epidemic, 2021			
	People living with HIV in 2021	People acquiring HIV in 2021	People dying from HIV-related causes in 2021
 Total	38.4 million [33.9–43.8 million]	1.5 million [1.1–2.0 million]	650 000 [510 000–860 000]
 Adults (15+ years)	36.7 million [32.3–41.9 million]	1.3 million [990 000–1.8 million]	560 000 [430 000–740 000]
 Women (15+ years)	19.7 million [17.6–22.4 million]	640 000 [480 000–870 000]	240 000 [180 000–320 000]
 Men (15+ years)	16.9 million [14.6–19.7 million]	680 000 [500 000–920 000]	320 000 [250 000–430 000]
 Children (<15 years)	1.7 million [1.3–2.1 million]	160 000 [110 000–230 000]	98 000 [67 000–140 000]

Source: UNAIDS/WHO estimates
Updated: July 2022

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2. Definition of Key terms

Active immunity describes the protection from a disease due to either a previous infection or receiving a vaccination preventing an infection.

Acute HIV infection is the stage following the infection in which the virus production increases rapidly. After the infection, the immune system starts to produce antibodies. High levels of the virus will be detected in the blood.

Key populations are groups with a higher risk of contracting HIV, due to different reasons such as higher-risk behaviour, legal and social issues, or job duties.

Vulnerable populations describe a group of people who are more vulnerable to the explosion of an HIV infection due to situations or surroundings, such as girls in sub-Saharan Africa, homeless people, orphans, or migrants.

Serodiscordant couples are couples with one HIV- negative and one HIV-positive partner.

Accidental inoculation is the exposure to HIV due to job duties, for example by a nurse or doctor. This happens through the contact of mucous membranes, skin, blood, tissues, or other body fluids.

Rapid diagnostic tests are used to detect HIV-1 as well as HIV-2 antibodies. It is an in vitro immunochromatographic diagnostic test.

International Guidelines urge governments, NGOs, regional bodies, and the United Nations system itself to follow these guidelines, build upon these, and find ways to enforce them to protect human rights concerning HIV.

National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day (NYHAAD), is a national day in the US to educate the public and especially young people about the impact of HIV and AIDS. The HIV prevention, treatment, and campaigns of young people are very important and are being discussed. (April 10)

3. History

Scientists believe that the HIV originated in Africa, being caused by non-human primates. They found a virus in chimpanzees and gorillas, which seems closely related to the HIV-1 virus that so many suffer from today. They calculated that the transmission from monkey to human probably first occurred during the late 19th or beginning of the 20th century, a time in which equatorial Africa was urbanised and colonised. The exact timing remains unknown. But there are many theories surrounding the origin of HIV. Scientists were able to trace back the distribution path using preserved tissue samples: ZR59 and DRC60. Both samples come from the Kinshasa region from 1959 and 1960, and both samples are HIV-positive. That means that they are the oldest proven HIV infections.

Between 1920 and 1960, the population of Léopoldville exploded, from about 20,000 to more than 400,000 people. The virus has settled here. The main routes of transmission included unprotected sexual intercourse and the reuse of syringes and needles without sterilising them. Outside Africa, the virus did not pose a problem until the 1960s. It first made its way to Haiti. And because many Haitians worked abroad, from there to the Western world.

In the 1970s, it rapidly spread, especially within gay communities, which eventually led to the discovery of the disease. This is also the reason why it was first referred to as gay-related immune deficiency, or GRID for short.

In the 1980s the disease was renamed to its today's name AIDS. In 1983 it was discovered that women can also be exposed to HIV through heterosexual intercourse. The first

International Conference on AIDS was held in Georgia, USA. The first Canadian Conference on AIDS was held in Montreal.

4. Key issues

Research on a vaccine has been carried out– so far, without success; this is because the virus mutates very quickly. As a result, more different virus variants develop in the body of an HIV-positive person every day than influenza variants worldwide each year. However, effective drug therapies were developed – HIV no longer means a death sentence. While it is still considered incurable, the right therapy can help in keeping the viral load in the body of infected people below the detection limit. Vaccines, bone marrow transplants, or the ethically controversial use of gene scissors for HIV immunity – research continues in the search for a cure. This is also a race against time, because the longer the fight against HIV, the more likely it is that the virus will develop resistance to existing therapies.

HIV is both a consequence and a cause of poverty. This is also the case in Africa, where AIDS is particularly prevalent. In Kenya alone, more than 1.4 million people are infected. Although the death rate has already been significantly reduced, the epidemic continues to kill millions of people. Many children are left as orphans or have infected themselves with HIV. Nearly 14 million AIDS orphans live in sub-Saharan Africa. Children often have to take care of their sick parents and end up on the streets after their death. Poverty also leads to affected individuals not being able to afford condoms, an HIV test or treatments. In addition, the medical infrastructure remains very poor in large parts of Africa and other developing countries. In many places, there is a shortage of doctors and medical facilities.

Many people also become infected with HIV because of insufficient information about the transmission pathways and consequences. In addition, many governments remain silent on sexuality, a fact which contributes to the spread of HIV, as talking about transmission pathways and their prevention is more difficult. Sexual and reproductive health and Rights (SRGR) require enlightened people to be able to decide for themselves about their bodies. In some societies, however, there are other values deeply rooted in people (for example, religious reasons make it difficult to discuss sexuality). Information and education work must

therefore be carried out in a social and culturally adapted manner. In countries with successful prevention, the decline in HIV prevalence is associated with access to education.

Another reason for the spread of HIV/AIDS is that many women are forced into prostitution because of their extreme poverty. In the absence of contraception by condoms, they become infected in this way and transmit the virus to many other suitors. At the same time, violence against women is high. Many suffer from AIDS because they are raped by an HIV-positive perpetrator. In southern Africa, girls aged 15 to 19 account for 90 percent of new infections.

5. Major Parties Involved

The United States of America

HIV was first detected in the United States in 1981, and it quickly escalated into a public health crisis affecting millions of people across the country. Members of the LGBTQ community, people who use intravenous drugs, and persons of colour have been disproportionately affected by the epidemic. In response to the crisis, the United States government enacted the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act in 1990 to fund HIV treatment and care. Since then, antiretroviral therapy (ART) has made HIV a manageable chronic disease for many people in the United States. Today, the United States continues to be a global leader in HIV research, prevention, and treatment, with organizations like the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) playing critical roles in the global fight against HIV/AIDS.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The first cases of HIV were reported in the United Kingdom in 1982, and the number of people infected with the virus has steadily increased since then. In response, the UK government has implemented a variety of HIV prevention and management measures, such

as free testing, access to antiretroviral treatment, and public awareness campaigns. The UK announced in 2019 that it is on track to end new HIV transmissions by 2030, in addition to reducing new diagnoses by 80% by 2025. The Terrence Higgins Trust, which provides support and advocacy for people living with HIV, and organizes campaigns for better access to prevention and treatment options, is also based in the United Kingdom. While HIV remains a serious public health concern in the United Kingdom, the country's response to the epidemic has been marked by a dedication to evidence-based policies and a focus on meeting the needs of those most affected by the virus.

France

The first HIV cases in France were discovered in the early 1980s, and the country quickly became one of Europe's most affected by the epidemic. As a result, the French government launched a number of initiatives to combat HIV transmission and improve care for those infected with the virus. Notably, beginning in 1996, France was one of the first countries to provide free antiretroviral treatment to people living with HIV. Over the last few decades, this has contributed to a significant reduction in HIV-related morbidity and mortality in France. However, challenges remain, such as HIV rate disparities between populations and ongoing efforts to combat HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

Eswatini

HIV was first detected in Eswatini in 1986, but it has since spread to epidemic proportions. In 2016, Eswatini had the highest prevalence of HIV among adults aged 15 to 49 in the world (27.2%). The HIV epidemic in Eswatini has played a significant role in the high mortality rates among productive Swazi age groups. When referring to a larger scale, the epidemic and its survivors induced significant cultural changes in local practices and ideas about death, dying, and illness, as well as an expansion of life insurance and mortuary service markets and health-related non-governmental organizations.

Lesotho

The presence of HIV/AIDS in Lesotho is a serious threat to the Basotho people and the country's economic development. HIV/AIDS has spread at an alarming rate throughout

Lesotho since its discovery in 1986. King Letsie III declared HIV/AIDS a natural disaster in 2000. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Lesotho's adult prevalence rate of 25% in 2016 was the world's second highest, trailing only Eswatini.

Botswana

Botswana is one of the top four countries in the world in terms of HIV and AIDS prevalence, with an adult HIV prevalence of 20.3%. In terms of the severity of the epidemic, the country is only behind Eswatini, and Lesotho. In 2018, approximately 370,000 people in Botswana were living with HIV, with 29,500 of them being young people aged 15 to 24, with the majority being female (64%). Particularly unsettling is the fact that three out of every ten new HIV infections in Botswana in 2018 occurred among adolescents and young people aged 15 to 24 years. Young females in this age group were twice as likely as males of the same age to be newly infected, and adolescent girls aged 10 to 19 years were three times more likely to be infected than boys in the same age group.

UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is a United Nations program dedicated to combating the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. UNAIDS was founded in 1996 and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It operates in over 70 countries. UNAIDS coordinates international efforts to combat HIV/AIDS through a variety of initiatives, such as advocating for increased funding for HIV prevention and treatment programs, promoting human rights and gender equality, and encouraging the development of effective and affordable HIV treatments. UNAIDS collaborates with governments, civil society organizations, and people living with HIV/AIDS in order to ensure that those living with the disease have access to the care, support, and resources they require to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

6. Timeline

- 1981: The first cases of what would later be known as AIDS are reported in the United States.

- 1983: French researchers discover the AIDS virus and name it the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).
- 1985: The US Food and Drug Administration approves the first commercial HIV blood test (FDA).
- 1985: The Foundation for Aids Research (amfAR) is created and it is a non-profit organization dedicated to the support of AIDS research, HIV prevention, treatment education, and advocacy.
- 1987: The antiretroviral drug AZT is approved by the FDA for the treatment of HIV/AIDS
- 1996: In developed countries, the introduction of combination antiretroviral therapy (ART) results in a significant reduction in AIDS-related deaths, transforming HIV/AIDS from a fatal disease to a chronic manageable condition.
- 1996: UNAIDS – Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS is founded
- 2000: The United Nations establishes a goal of universal access to HIV treatment and care by 2010.
- 2003: The US government launches the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to provide funding for HIV prevention, treatment, and care in developing countries.
- 2011: The HIV Prevention Trials Network (HPTN) publishes the findings of a study demonstrating that pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) can reduce the risk of HIV transmission significantly.
- 2020: The COVID-19 pandemic disrupts HIV testing, treatment, and prevention efforts around the world, raising concerns about potential setbacks in the HIV/AIDS fight.

7. Evaluation of Previous Attempts

In the United Kingdom, there have been several successful campaigns including the "Don't Die of Ignorance" campaign in the 1980s, which used graphic imagery to warn the public about the risks of HIV/AIDS. The campaign increased public awareness and encouraged people to take precautions. Similarly, the "It Starts With Me" campaign, which debuted in 2012, aimed to encourage HIV testing and reduce HIV stigma. The campaign, which used social media and other online platforms to reach a larger audience, was deemed a success.

To combat the spread of HIV in the United States, the "ABC" campaign, which emphasized abstinence, faithfulness, and the use of condoms, was launched in the 1990s. The campaign highlighted the importance of personal responsibility and was successful in reducing HIV transmission among specific populations. However, the campaign was criticized for being overly simplistic and failing to address the epidemic's root causes, such as poverty and discrimination.

In the late 1980s, the "Act Up" movement in France was launched to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and advocate for improved access to treatment and support for people living with HIV. To draw attention to the issue, the movement used confrontational tactics and civil disobedience, and it played a significant role in changing attitudes toward HIV/AIDS in France.

While previous attempts to raise HIV awareness have had varying degrees of success, it is critical to continue efforts to educate the public and combat the virus's spread. Innovative and targeted approaches addressing the social, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to HIV transmission will be critical to achieving this goal.

8. Possible Solutions

Comprehensive sex education programs in schools would benefit people all over the world: Such education programs in schools should be implemented to provide students with accurate and age-appropriate information about HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and safe sex practices.

The use of social media and other digital platforms may benefit nations all over the world: platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok can be used to educate and engage young people about HIV. Influencers, celebrities, and other public figures can also use their social media presence to promote HIV testing and prevention.

Involving youth in advocacy and awareness campaigns will almost certainly result in a positive response: By involving youth in advocacy and awareness campaigns, they can be empowered to take an active role in HIV prevention efforts. Young people can use their voices to raise awareness and advocate for HIV testing, prevention, and treatment policies.

Providing simple and accessible testing and treatment options will undoubtedly help with this problem: Making HIV testing and treatment more readily available and accessible may encourage more young people to get tested and seek treatment. This can be accomplished by providing mobile testing clinics, pop-up testing locations, and free or low-cost testing and treatment options.

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