

AIDS - New Zealand

AIDS AND HIV INFECTION IN NEW ZEALAND TO END OF JUNE 1998

In the second quarter of 1998, there were 9 notifications of AIDS (6 males, 2 females, and one transsexual), while 25 people (23 males, 2 females) were found to be infected with HIV.

To the end of June 1998, in total 656 people (626 male and 30 female) have been notified with AIDS, and 1283 (1129 male, 135 female and 19 sex not stated) have been found to be infected with HIV.

The cumulative incidence rate of AIDS notifications to the end of June 1998 was 19.0 per 100,000 total population.

THE GLOBAL EPIDEMIC OF HIV INFECTION AND AIDS

A recent report from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO) provides disturbing new figures on the number of people affected by the world-wide epidemic of HIV infection and AIDS [Report on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. UNAIDS/WHO. June 1998].

It is important for New Zealanders to understand the world-wide situation. Policy makers need to learn from other countries about possible effects and ways of controlling the epidemic; health professionals need to know the risks of HIV among people from - or who have had sexual contact with people from, other parts of the world; and individual New Zealanders need to be aware of the situation, so they can minimise their own risks.

It is estimated that by the end of 1997 over 30 million people were living with HIV (Table 1), and that 11.7 million had already died from AIDS.

These infections are concentrated in the developing world, mostly in countries least able to afford care for infected people. Nearly 90%

of people with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa and South and South-East Asia.

The virus continues to spread rapidly, causing an estimated 16,000 new infections each day. During 1997, 5.8 million new infections occurred, despite all that is known to prevent this happening (Table 2).

In countries most affected there have been enormous numbers of deaths among young adults, at the age when people are */cont.*

Area	Number
Sub-Saharan Africa	21,000,000
South & South-East Asia	5,800,000
Latin America	1,300,000
North America	860,000
Western Europe	480,000
East Asia & Pacific	420,000
Caribbean	310,000
North Africa & Middle East	210,000
Eastern Europe & Central Asia	190,000
Australia & New Zealand	12,000
Total	30,582,000

Table 1 Estimated number of people living with HIV/AIDS at end of 1997 (UNAIDS/WHO)

forming families and having children. This inevitably leads to an increase in the number of orphans. In 1997 alone, 1.6 million children were "orphaned" (defined by UNAIDS/WHO as children who have lost their mother or both parents) by HIV.

There are important changes in the patterns of spread of the epidemic. Infection rates are rising rapidly in southern Africa, much of Asia, and Eastern Europe, in contrast to the situation in many industrialised parts of the world.

Sub-Saharan Africa: the epidemic shifts south

Over two thirds of all infected people, and four out of five infected women, live in Africa south of the Sahara Desert. Whereas the southern-most countries of the continent were apparently unaffected in the early 1980s, the situation has changed, and today the most severe epidemics are there. For example, in Zimbabwe in 1997, one in four adults were thought to be infected.

Asia: low rates but rapid spread

Although HIV arrived relatively late in Asia,

once introduced its spread has been swift. By 1992 a number of countries led by Thailand, were facing increasing numbers of infections, and by 1997 it was established across the continent.

South and South East Asia have been affected most. Although HIV infection remains uncommon in some countries here, such as Laos, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, others in the region - including Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, show much higher levels. The reason for the differences is not entirely clear. Nor is there any certainty that the prevalence will remain low in those areas that have seen only a modest spread so far, given the widespread occurrence of risk behaviours including commercial sex and, in some places, drug injecting.

Eastern Europe: drug injection drives HIV

Until the mid-1990s, most of the countries of Eastern Europe appeared to have been spared the worst of the HIV epidemic. However the pattern began to change dramatically in recent years in several countries of the former /cont.

People newly infected with HIV in 1997	Total	5.8 million
	Adults	5.2 million
	Women	2.1 million
	Children <15 yrs	590,000
Number of people living with HIV/AIDS	Total	30.6 million
	Adults	29.4 million
	Women	12.2 million
	Children <15 yrs	1.1 million
AIDS deaths in 1997	Total	2.3 million
	Adults	1.8 million
	Women	800,000
	Children <15 yrs	460,000
Total number of AIDS deaths since the beginning of the epidemic	Total	11.7 million
	Adults	9.0 million
	Women	3.9 million
	Children <15 yrs	2.7 million
Total number of AIDS orphans* since the beginning of the epidemic		8.2 million

* children who have lost their mother or both parents to AIDS when they were under the age of 15

Table 2 Global estimates of HIV/AIDS epidemic as of the end of 1997. (UNAIDS/WHO)

Soviet Union, Belarus, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine have all registered rapid growth in HIV infection rates over the last three years, mostly related to unsafe drug injecting.

The industrial world

In general industrial countries concentrate on following AIDS cases rather than tracking HIV. And as HIV infections continue to rise in the developing world, AIDS cases in many industrial countries are falling.

Because of the time delay between HIV infection and AIDS, the behaviour changes encouraged among men who have sex with men since the 1980s are only now being reflected in fewer new cases of AIDS. However the most recent and in some areas dramatic drop - the US recorded its first ever reduction in cases of AIDS in 1996, is probably due mostly to the new antiretroviral therapies which postpone the development of AIDS in infected people.

However in some disadvantaged sections of industrialised societies, such as in some marginalised groups in the US, AIDS reports continue to rise.

In New Zealand, even though the number of new cases of AIDS has dropped in recent years, the number of people living with diagnosed HIV has continued to increase [AIDS - New Zealand, Issue 39, February 1998].

NOTIFICATIONS OF AIDS IN NEW ZEALAND IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1998

Nine people, 6 males, 2 females and one transsexual, were notified with AIDS in the second quarter of 1998.

Of the 6 males, 5 were reported to have been infected through sex with other men, and one to have been heterosexually infected (he was from a part of the world where heterosexual transmission is common). Both of the females notified were from parts of the world where heterosexual transmission is common: one was

reported to have been heterosexually infected, and the means of infection of the other was not known. The likely means of infection of the transsexual person was reported as "homosexual behaviour". Because of concerns about possible loss of anonymity, information on people notified as transsexual will continue to be included with that for males.

Two incorrect notifications (one man and one woman) have been removed from the AIDS database. Therefore, a total of 656 people were notified as having AIDS in New Zealand by 30 June 1998 (Tables 3 and 4).

PEOPLE FOUND TO BE INFECTED WITH HIV IN NEW ZEALAND IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1998

The Group has been informed of 25 people found to be infected with HIV in the second quarter of 1998. Of these, 23 were male, and 2 were female.

Of the 23 males information has been obtained on 18. Of these, 12 had had sex with men, and 2 were reported to have been heterosexually infected. One of the heterosexually infected men was from a part of the world where heterosexual transmission is common, and the other was reported to have been infected in Australia (the risk category of this sexual contact was not known). The means of infection was unknown for the remaining 4 men for whom information has been received, the means of infection was unknown. Three of these men were from parts of the world where heterosexual transmission is common, and the remaining man denied any risk behaviours.

There were 2 females found to be infected in the second quarter of 1998. One, who was from a part of the world where heterosexual transmission is common, was reported to have been heterosexually infected. The other was a 3 year old child from overseas who was considered likely to have been perinatally infected.

Table 3 Exposure category by time of notification of people with AIDS, and by time of diagnosis for those found to be infected with HIV

Exposure category	Sex	AIDS				HIV Infection *			
		12 months to 30.6.98		Total to 30.6.98		12 months to 30.6.98		Total to 30.6.98	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Homosexual contact	Male	24	66.7	532	81.1	32	37.2	702	54.7
Homosexual contact & IDU	Male	0	0	10	1.5	1	1.2	13	1.0
Heterosexual contact	Male	6	16.7	31	4.7	16	18.6	63	4.9
	Female	2	5.6	21	3.2	12	14.0	92	7.1
Injecting drug use (IDU)	Male	1	2.8	10	1.5	0	0	31	2.4
	Female	0	0	5	0.8	0	0	8	0.6
Blood product recipient	Male	1	2.8	15	2.3	0	0	29	2.3
Transfusion recipient	Male	0	0	1	0.2	0	0	3	0.2
	Female	0	0	1	0.2	0	0	5	0.4
	NS	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0.4
Perinatal	Male	1	2.8	1	0.2	2	2.3	5	0.4
	Female	0	0	1	0.2	0	0	4	0.3
Awaiting information/ undetermined	Male	0	0	26	4.0	17	19.8	281	21.9
	Female	1	2.8	2	0.2	5	5.8	22	1.7
	NS	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	1.1
Other	Male	0	0	0	0	1	1.2	2	0.2
	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0.3
TOTAL		36	100.0	656	100.0	86	100.0	1283	100.0

NS = Not stated

*Includes people who have developed AIDS

Table 4 Ethnicity by time of notification of people with AIDS, and by time of diagnosis for those found to be infected with HIV. Information on ethnicity of people found to be infected with HIV is only available since 1996

Ethnicity	Sex	AIDS				HIV Infection *			
		12 months to 30.6.98		Total to 30.6.98		12 months to 30.6.98		1.1.96 to 30.6.98	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
European/Pakeha	Male	20	55.6	509	77.6	33	38.4	92	44.4
	Female	0	0	20	3.0	2	2.3	10	4.8
Maori†	Male	6	16.7	71	10.8	7	8.1	16	7.7
	Female	0	0	1	0.2	0	0	2	1.0
Pacific Island	Male	1	2.8	14	2.1	0	0	2	1.0
	Female	0	0	3	0.5	1	1.2	3	1.4
Other	Male	6	16.7	25	3.8	19	22.1	37	17.9
	Female	3	8.3	6	0.9	16	18.6	30	14.5
Awaiting information/ undetermined	Male	0	0	7	1.1	8	9.3	14	6.8
	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
TOTAL		36	100.0	656	100.0	86	100.0	207	100.0

NS = Not stated

*Includes people who have developed AIDS

†Includes people who belong to Maori and another ethnic group

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