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# HIV & AIDS Surveillance in New Zealand

## Guide for clinicians

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The AIDS Epidemiology Group (AEG) has, since 1989, been responsible for the surveillance of AIDS and HIV infection in New Zealand, under contract to the Ministry of Health. Information is reported in a Confidential Quarterly Report to the Ministry of Health and a bi-annual **AIDS-New Zealand** Newsletter.

The patient is identified by an anonymous AIDS-type code made up of the first two letters of the surname, first letter of the given name, sex, and date of birth. All information received by the AEG is held in conditions of strict confidence. No information on identifiable individuals is ever released.

The various components of surveillance include:

### 1. AIDS notifications

AIDS is notifiable under the Health Act. A "**CASE REPORT FORM FOR AIDS**" is to be completed on any patient who presents with an AIDS defining illness as outlined in the Ministry of Health Management Guidelines. The form is available on the AEG website [www.otago.ac.nz/aidsepigroup](http://www.otago.ac.nz/aidsepigroup) or the ESR website: [http://www.surv.esr.cri.nz/episurv/CaseReportForms/AIDS\\_MOH\\_1A\\_Form\\_Sept2006.pdf](http://www.surv.esr.cri.nz/episurv/CaseReportForms/AIDS_MOH_1A_Form_Sept2006.pdf). Once completed, it is to be sent to the local Medical Officer of Health who will then forward it to the Group.

#### **Follow up of AIDS cases**

a) Outcome information: Please let the AEG know of any patient under your care who has died. Once a year, clinicians who have reported an AIDS case, will be sent a letter from the AEG asking for an update on patient outcomes such as whether the patient is alive, has died or has gone overseas.

b) In order to ensure completeness of AIDS notifications, the AEG receives death certificates from the New Zealand Health Information Service of any individual who has HIV and/or AIDS on their death certificate. These are checked against the AIDS register and if not on the register the relevant clinician will be asked to complete an AIDS notification. Death certificate information is usually delayed by about 2 years.

### 2. HIV reports

Since 1996 the AEG has carried out enhanced surveillance of HIV whereby the codes of patients diagnosed with HIV, and clinician's name, are received monthly from the two laboratories that perform confirmatory Western blot HIV antibody testing. Information is then requested from clinicians on the form "**CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF A NEW DIAGNOSIS OF HIV INFECTION**". The supply of this information is voluntary, but will assist in the control of the HIV/AIDS epidemic if it is as complete as possible. The information may be able to be completed from clinical notes, or by asking the patient some extra questions. If the patient is unable to be contacted for this information, we request that the form still be returned as complete as possible.

To ensure a high return rate, the AEG will follow up non-returned forms and forms that are incomplete or where information is not known at the time of completing.

### 3. First Viral Load reports

From the beginning of 2002 information has also been received from the four New Zealand laboratories performing viral load tests. This allows a cross check of data to ensure that all those living in New Zealand with HIV are included on the database. The codes of patients who have had a first viral load test are sent monthly from each laboratory. Information is then requested from clinicians on the green form "**CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF HIV INFECTION FIRST NOTIFIED BECAUSE OF VIRAL LOAD TESTING**" for any patient who is not known to us on the HIV database. Similar to HIV reports, the AEG will follow up non-returned forms and forms that are incomplete or where information is not known at the time of completing.

If you would like any further details of this process, further information on the epidemiology of HIV or AIDS in New Zealand, or if you would like to receive regular copies of *AIDS-New Zealand*, please contact:

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE**

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