



Research Report

World Health Organization

Establishing improved protocol in order to prevent the further spread of the AIDS pandemic

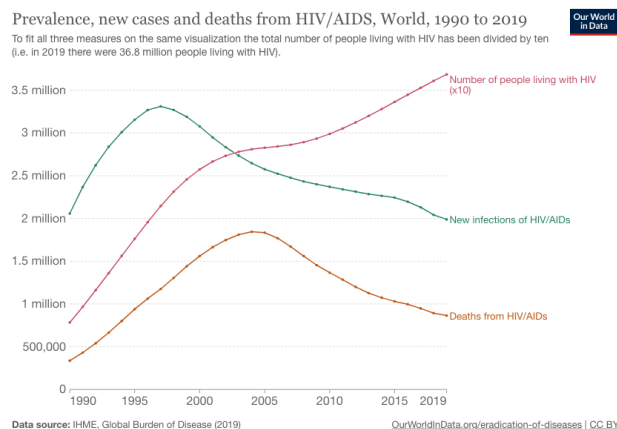
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INTRODUCTION

In the developing world, where advanced technology and experts constantly search for ways to improve global living standards, it is important to pay specific attention to issues that not only impact minorities but have severe consequences on human life. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has been an ongoing issue since it was first brought to scientific and public attention in 1981. People affected with HIV have faced stigma, discrimination, and inadequate treatment for decades. As a result, many are uneducated about this disease, further allowing the dissemination of it throughout the global population.



In 2022, around 39 million people around the globe were living with HIV. Furthermore, in 2022, 1.3 million people became newly infected with HIV, and 630,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses. Although, the number of new infections from the 1990s, the number of people living with HIV has more than tripled in the last 3 decades. This is, in part, due to the increasing availability of treatment for HIV. However, there are still many

without access to this treatment, and without sufficient and appropriate knowledge of the disease. This debate will focus on improving protocol in order to prevent the further spread of the AIDS pandemic. This issue is multifaceted and includes discussions about education, access to healthcare, stigma, and more.

Definitions of Key Terms

HIV - refers to the Human Immunodeficiency virus.

AIDS - AIDS is the most advanced stage of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. (WHO)

Key Populations - are groups that have a high risk and disproportionate burden of HIV in all epidemic settings. They frequently face legal and social challenges that increase their vulnerability to HIV, including barriers to accessing HIV prevention, treatment and other health and social services. Key populations include men who have sex with men (MSM), people who inject drugs, people in prisons and closed settings, sex workers and transgender people.

Vulnerable Populations - populations that are vulnerable to HIV in certain situations or contexts such as adolescent girls (especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa), people with disabilities, or migrant workers. This may be due to social or legal barriers involving treatment. Furthermore, these populations are not affected uniformly in each country.

Combination Prevention - a prevention approach that factors in behavioral, biomedical, and structural aspects to achieve maximum effect on reducing the transmission of HIV.

Early Infant Diagnosis - refers to the procedure of testing infants to determine if they have any exposure to the virus during pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding.

Point-of-Care testing - testing that is done near specific affected sites where care is being provided. These centres often use rapid diagnostic testing to receive results as fast as possible.

Community Health Workers - health workers who are given standardized and nationally endorsed training in a certain area.

Non-Physician Clinicians - health workers who have received professional training and have diagnostic and clinical abilities, but are not trained physicians.

MSM - refers to men who have sex with other men. This term was created in the 1990s by healthcare officials to track the route of HIV transmission and focuses more on behavioral identification rather than gender or sexuality identification.

Perinatal Transmission - refers to the transmission of HIV from a mother to a child, in the womb.

General overview

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, commonly referred to as AIDS, is the most advanced form of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). HIV targets the white blood cells of a patient, making them more susceptible to other diseases, such as tuberculosis, bacterial infections, and more. People affected with this disease typically experience even small infections on a large scale, due to their weakened immune system. HIV is transmitted through bodily fluids such as blood, breast milk, semen, and vaginal fluids. Furthermore, it can also be spread from a mother to a child, during gestation (WHO)

As of July 2023, HIV has affected 40.4 million people over the world, around two-thirds of which are living in the World Health Organisation's African Region. This consists of 47 member states, with the regional office in the Republic of Congo. HIV also disproportionately affects gay or bisexual men, people of color (specifically Black, Latino, and Native American people), transgender women, youths between ages 13 to 24, and injected drug users (HIV.org).

The first major outbreak of HIV began in June of 1981. This began with an increase of unidentifiable pneumonia in young gay men, along with strange cases of skin cancer. Due to the origin of this disease, it was largely associated with homosexuality. It was even referred to as “gay-related immunodeficiency” by the media and some healthcare professionals in the United States. Furthermore, the first few cases of AIDS were reported in Africa in 1982. Due to the significant rise in cases, the World Health Organization held a conference to assess the international impact of AIDS and set up international surveillance in 1983. By 1985, at least one case of HIV was reported in every region of the world.

HIV rapidly spread across the globe, ensuing a “national health crisis” in the United States, and multiple international conferences were held to try and reduce the impact of this disease. Additionally, many were educated about safe sex and condom use. However, much stigma was still associated with the virus and its relation to homosexuality. HIV is considerably more contagious through anal sex, due to rectal cells being more fragile and having fewer barriers to protect from the virus. Furthermore, many MSM face social stigma due to homophobia, racism and poverty, leading to dishonesty with medical professionals and sexual partners and lacking knowledge of safe sex.

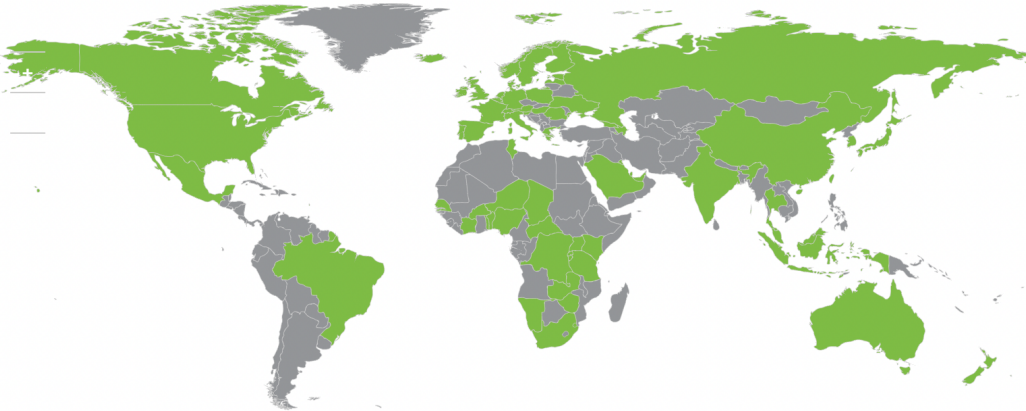
Although the HIV/AIDS epidemic was first discovered in the United States, as cases increased, Sub-Saharan Africa became the most severely affected area in the world, followed by Asia and the Pacific. This stems from a coalition of many reasons, including poverty, lack of education, lack of proper medical care and social stigma. The treatment of women in certain regions further exacerbates this issue. Many women are victims of sexual violence and rape committed by HIV-positive offenders. Additionally, the widespread poverty often increases prostitution rates, allowing the virus to proliferate.

Major parties involved

World Health Organisation (WHO) - The World Health Organization is an intergovernmental organization and a specialised agency of the UN. It brings together nations to promote health and help those needing medical care.

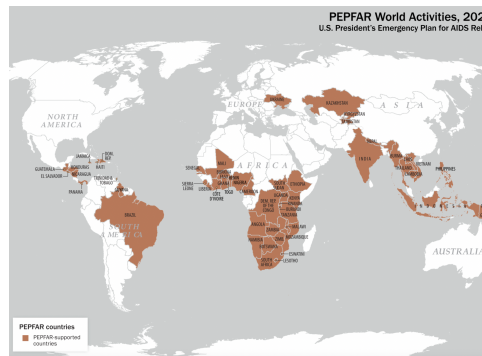
1. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) - This is a programme established by the United Nations to fight against AIDS around the globe. It is a partnership between 11 specialised agencies in the UN, including UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNW, UNDP, UNFPA, WHO, WFP, UNODC, ILO and the World Bank.
2. The Global Fund - This is an international organization founded in 2002, established to reduce the spread of AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. It invests more than 4 billion USD a year in an effort to fight against these illnesses and works with governments, civilians, healthcare professionals, and technological agencies to work against these fatal diseases. The Global Fund has provided 30% of the total international financial aid for HIV programmes and has invested more than 24 billion USD in the aforementioned programmes. This organisation is funded by many countries in

the world (indicated on the map below) and many non-governmental organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.



Data updated on: 15 November 2023

3. International AIDS Society (IAS) - The IAS is the world's largest association of HIV professionals and was founded in 1988. It brings together scientific experts, policy makers, and healthcare professionals to build a world in which HIV no longer poses a threat to an individual's well-being.
4. Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) - the KFF is a non-profit organisation that focuses on the United States' role in global health policy, by conducting research and analysis on current HIV-related policies in the U.S. It also monitors countries and their progress with the U.S President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (also known as PEPFAR). PEPFAR includes more than 50 countries, most of them in Sub-Saharan Africa. The map below indicates the countries that are a part of the PEPFAR programme, as of 2022.



5.

Timeline of Key Events

1981 - First cases of pneumonia reported in young gay men in the June 5 Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

1982 - The CDC establishes the term Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and identifies risk factors including male homosexuality, intravenous drug use, Haitian origin and haemophilia A.

- First AIDS case reported in Africa

1983 - The WHO holds the first meeting to assess the impact of AIDS globally and begins international surveillance

1985 - The first HIV test is licensed by the U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which detects antibodies of HIV.

1986 - Second International AIDS conference, held in Paris

- The first drug to treat HIV/AIDS, Azidothymidine (AZT), begins clinical trials

1987 - First antiretroviral drug, AZT, approved by the U.S FDA

- Third International AIDS conference, held in Washington, D.C
- Global Programme on AIDS launched by WHO

1988 - First World AIDS day, declared by WHO (1st December)

- WHO reports that AIDS cases have increased by 56% worldwide
- 4th International AIDS conference, held in Stockholm

1989 - 5th International AIDS conference, held in Montreal

1990 - 6th International AIDS conference, held in San Francisco. This protest was eventually boycotted to protest U.S immigration policies, as people with AIDS were not being allowed in the country.

1992 - AIDS becomes the leading cause of death for men in the U.S men, aged 25 to 44

- 8th International Conference is moved from Boston to Amsterdam, due to immigration restrictions in the U.S for people with HIV/AIDS.

1994 - AIDS becomes the leading cause of death for all Americans, aged 25 to 44

1996 - UNAIDS begins its operations

- U.S FDA approves a home testing kit for the HI virus

1998 - U.S CDC reports that African Americans account for 49% of U.S AIDS-related deaths

1999 - WHO announces that HIV/AIDS has become the fourth biggest killer worldwide, and the leading cause of death in Africa.

2002 - The Global Fund is established

- UNAIDS reports that average life expectancy has fallen from 62 to 47 years in Sub-Saharan Africa, due to the AIDS

2003 - G8 Summit includes a special focus on HIV/AIDS and announces financial commitments to the Global Fund.

- George W. Bush introduces the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), a 5 billion USD, 5 year plan to fight AIDS

2007 - Rwandan Government hosts the International HIV/AIDS Implementers Meeting where over 1,500 delegates shared lessons on HIV prevention, treatment and care. This meeting was sponsored largely by the WHO, UNAIDS, PEPFAR and the Global Fund.

2013 - President Obama signs the HIV Organ Policy Equity Act, allowing people living with HIV to receive organs from other infected donors.

- UNAIDS announces that HIV infections have dropped more than 50% in 25 low and middle income countries

Possible solutions

Although there is no cure for HIV/AIDS, there are many medications that can control it, called Antiretroviral Therapy (ART). Examples of these medications include Ziduvine, as mentioned in the timeline. As of 2022, 76% of people with HIV were receiving treatment through antiretroviral therapy, whereas 71% had suppressed viral loads, indicating a high success rate. However, prevention is an utmost priority when it comes to this virus. The spread of this virus can be accounted to a variety of factors. Firstly, lack of education concerning HIV/AIDS. Throughout the past few decades, many healthcare centres have been set up in high-risk areas, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many locals have been given standardized knowledge about medical care for HIV/AIDS patients and have disseminated this knowledge throughout the community.

Nonetheless, the social stigma around AIDS has not changed considerably. It is important for communities to understand the implications of this disease. This includes learning about the modes of transmission, the possible symptoms, and methods of prevention, especially in communities where poverty, illiteracy, and sexual violence are rampant. Furthermore, these communities require and deserve increased access to antiretroviral therapy and preventative drugs.

It is also significantly important to diagnose patients as quickly as possible. As of 2022, around 5.5 million people, globally, did not know that they had HIV, until they were tested. This is not only dangerous due to the consequences on individual health but also implies the further transmission of the virus. This could also manifest in infants being born with HIV, without the knowledge of the mother. Fortunately, perinatal transmission can be avoided by taking antiretroviral medication. This medication reduces the chance of transmission to less than 1%.

In the past few decades, the status of the AIDS epidemic has improved greatly, especially with the introduction of medication that is successful in suppressing the effects of the virus. However, the number of people infected with HIV stays consistently high. This is now, not only an issue of science, but providing adequate healthcare to those in need, while assessing the cultural stigma and societal patterns of a region. Moreover, citizens need to be educated about HIV, to protect themselves and have access to medication and testing kits, when necessary. Yet again, this issue is multi-faceted and needs to be examined from all perspectives, including social, economic, political and scientific. As nations, part of this committee, we share a global responsibility to reduce the spread of the AIDS epidemic.

Further Readings

<https://www.hiv.gov/federal-response/pepfar-global-aids/global-hiv-aids-overview/>

<https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/fact-sheet/the-global-hiv-aids-epidemic/>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/spotlight/why-the-hiv-epidemic-is-not-over>

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