

"Health: STD Levels in India/Bangladesh Point to AIDS Explosion"
IPS Wire (03/06/00)

High levels of sexually transmitted diseases in India and Bangladesh could accelerate the pace of the expected HIV/AIDS explosion in South Asia, according to UNAIDS head Dr. Peter Piot. On Monday, Piot helped launch the "2000 World AIDS Campaign," which is focusing on the attitudes and behaviors of men. Piot said that India, with 3.7 million cases, has the most HIV infections in the world, out of a population of 1 billion. However, the low HIV prevalence is not expected to last because of low condom use among commercial sex workers and men's infidelity to their wives. The secrecy and stigma of HIV, related to extramarital affairs, has forced many men to keep the virus secret from their wives. Males in South Asia have great control over women, although Piot was careful not to blame all men for the spread of HIV in Asia. The new campaign, which carries the theme "Men Can Make a Difference," will urge men to have better sexual health and to take leadership in protecting their wives and daughters.

"Teens Report Pressure to Have Unprotected Sex"
Reuters Health Information Services (03/08/00)

A new survey from by the Washington-based National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy shows that almost half of U.S. teens say that pressure by a partner has led them to engage in unprotected sex. Using data from three national youth surveys involving thousands of young people, the researchers found that while most of the teens said that birth control is necessary for every sexual encounter, three out of 10 girls questioned said they used no contraception the last time they had sex. Many teens cited drug and alcohol use as reasons for neglecting contraception during sex. The researchers note that education is important for teens who have sex, as is parental guidance, particularly for younger teenagers.

"Unsafe Sex in Age of Viagra; Rising HIV Rates Show Seniors Often"
Austin American-Statesman (www.Austin360.com/news/newstop.htm)
(03/12/00) P. A19; Palmer, Louise, D.

The impotence drug Viagra has many health officials concerned about the spread of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases among older Americans. Older people are less likely to practice safe sex and rarely get tested for disease. R.H. Keller of the Biodorn clinic in Florida said, "The fastest-growing AIDS rate is among the geriatric population, and this is somewhat attributable to Pfizer (Viagra's manufacturer)." Health officials are concerned that as some older men become more sexually active, they may not realize that prevention efforts are necessary. Cultural stereotypes that people over 50 do not have sex are also problematic. Older women are very vulnerable to HIV and trust their partners more readily. In addition, older Americans tend not to ask their partners about possible diseases and may feel they do not need protection.

"Treatment Issues for HIV-Positive Adolescents"
AIDS Clinical Care (03/99) Vol. 11, No. 3, P. 1; Hoffman, Neal D.; Futterman, Donna; Myerson, Alice

HIV infection in adolescents may have different features compared to infection in adults. The Reaching for Excellence in Adolescent Care and Health (REACH) study is currently investigating infection differences found in younger patients. Initial findings indicate that adolescents may have a greater potential for immune reconstitution due to the presence of residual thymic tissue. Other studies show that most youth acquired their infection through sexual transmission during adolescence and begin care when asymptomatic, with moderate immune dysfunction. Perinatally infected children who survive to adolescence often have advanced disease. According to the Montefiore Adolescent AIDS Program, there are four primary issues that HIV-infected youth need to address in coping with their health status: receiving an HIV diagnosis, disclosing status to family and others, coping with illness, and preparing for death. Infected adolescents may have problems with mental illness and substance abuse, both of which are important co-morbidities for HIV-positive youth. These problems should be identified and addressed in patients to help them successfully cope with their disease and for the maintenance of antiretroviral adherence. Providers should be aware of the local legal issues in regard to the treatment of adolescents with sexually transmitted diseases. For routine health care, HIV-positive adolescents should be routinely screened for other STDs, while tuberculosis screening should be performed according to guidelines in place for HIV-infected adults. Pharmacokinetics may differ in adolescents, and antiretrovirals may have interactions with commonly prescribed medications in younger patients. The AIDS Clinical Trials Group is currently undertaking measures to institute adolescent-relevant trials to improve treatment measures for infected youth.

"Fear of Needles Needless"

Washington Times (www.washtimes.com) (03/18/99) P. C3; Redmon, Jeremy

A number of people in the Washington, D.C., area have expressed concern over a rumor that HIV-infected needles were being left in coin-return slots in public telephones. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention assures that the rumor is not true, and folklore experts call the story an urban legend. In Southwestern Virginia, though, two people were accidentally stuck with needles in February that had been left in telephone coin-return slots. Additionally, police in Wythe County, Va., found hypodermic needles in a post office mailbox, a night deposit box, and in a pay phone coin-return slot last February. Police believe that the incidents are the work of people imitating the rumors. Recently, many people have received e-mail messages warning of HIV-infected needles left on movie-theater seats and other places. Officials from the CDC note that individuals who are pricked by needles should go to the emergency room.

For a CDC statement regarding rumors about improperly discarded needles and syringes, go to http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/hiv_aids/pubs/faq/faq5a.htm.

"U.N. AIDS Chief Says No Vaccine for At Least 10 Years"

Fox News Online (www.foxnews.com) (03/17/99)

The head of the Joint U.N. Program on HIV/AIDS, Dr. Peter Piot, said Wednesday that an HIV vaccine will not be available for at least 10 more years. Piot added that prevention is the only current option available for reducing the spread of the virus, which infects 35 million people worldwide. Piot also noted that the disease is increasingly affecting young people and that "there's still far too little attention given to AIDS." UNAIDS is trying to increase this year HIV-prevention efforts in Africa; Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa are estimated to have 25 percent to 33 percent of their adult populations infected with the virus. HIV is also expected to cause a significant decline in the life expectancy of these populations, resulting in economic problems

"Tuberculosis Kills One Every 10 Seconds"

Washington Times (www.washtimes.com) (03/23/99) P. A17

The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease reported Monday that tuberculosis causes one death every 10 seconds worldwide. According to the organization, an estimated one-third of the global population is infected with the disease--with as many as 50 million people harboring drug-resistant strains. Tuberculosis is also one of the leading causes of death among people with AIDS.

"Beyond AIDS: Teenagers and STDs"

Washington Post (www.washingtonpost.com) (03/23/99) P. C4; Stepp, Laura Sessions

Many teenagers in the United States are informed about the dangers of HIV, but they are often unaware of many other common sexually transmitted diseases. A recent national survey of 15- to 17-year-olds found that the subjects seriously underestimated their risk of contracting STDs other than HIV. About one-third of the respondents who were sexually active felt they were at risk for acquiring an STD, and few subjects had been tested for infection. Less than half of the respondents knew that herpes and human papillomavirus have no known cure or that gonorrhea and syphilis can be cured. Teens are at a higher risk for contracting STDs compared to many other groups, with three-fourths of non-HIV STDs occurring in people aged 15 to 24. Many infected people are asymptomatic and unaware that they have an STD. STDs can later result in cancer, infertility, neurological diseases, and death. Dr. Helene Gayle, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's program for HIV, STD, and TB prevention, explains that "we as a society have not talked openly about STDs. ... There are severe consequences, particularly for young women." In addition to health issues, Gayle notes that STDs other than HIV cost about \$8 billion a year to diagnose and treat.