

New York Times (www.nytimes.com) (03/29/01) P. A1; Swarns, Rachel L.

While recent price cuts are making AIDS drugs more affordable for AIDS patients in Africa, the drugs are still out of reach for many people. With an estimated 4.7 million people infected with HIV, South Africa has the highest number of HIV cases in the world, and some 600,000 people require treatment. According to officials, the country's national health system is struggling and would be inadequately prepared to distribute the AIDS drugs and monitor compliance outside of some large hospitals. In Hlabisa, South Africa, there are approximately 40,000 people infected with HIV--one in three adults in the town--but only about 11 can pay for the drugs. For sick people in this rural region, the choice is all too often between buying food, paying school fees, or buying medicine. The town's hospital is crowded and understaffed, and health workers note that it is hard enough to make sure that outpatients with tuberculosis (TB) complete their six months of treatment. "The problems are vastly greater for AIDS patients than for TB, and we can't even manage TB," said Dr. Sean Drysdale, the community health officer responsible for HIV and tuberculosis programs in Hlabisa. According to Drysdale, they can only track 60 percent of TB patients in the area.

"Startling News: Growing AIDS Crisis Among Women"  
(03/01); Satcher, David

In a commentary, U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher notes that while many people see AIDS as a disease that affects only gay men, women now make up 24 percent of new AIDS cases. That figure is up from 6.7 percent nearly two decades ago. Satcher further points out that 81 percent of the AIDS cases among women between June 1999 and June 2000 were among African-American and Hispanic women. To determine why rates of HIV and AIDS are increasing among women, Satcher suggests looking to women's position in society and their interactions with men. According to the surgeon general, "We must address issues such as the lack of open conversation around sexual health that pervades sexual relationships in the U.S." This includes learning a partner's sexual history and addressing bisexuality. However, Satcher asserts that women, too, must make their own health a priority. "By helping one another," he concludes, "women can monitor their spiritual, mental, and physical health--including their reproductive health--and that of their partners." More information about Satcher's initiative, The Leadership Campaign Against AIDS is available online at [www.surgeongeneral.gov/aids/tlcapage1.html](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/aids/tlcapage1.html).

versions of the drug is now in battle for its life against nearly 40 of the top drug manufacturers in the world.

#### "South Africa's HIV Rate Climbs"

Washington Post ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)) (03/21/01) P. A24

New statistics indicate that one in nine South Africans is infected with HIV, with about 4.7 million South Africans infected as of year-end 2000. According to a study released by Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, the infection rate in the province of KwaZulu-Natal is greater than one in every three people. The study, which was based on reports from 400 clinics throughout South Africa, also found that 24.5 percent of women attending public postnatal clinics were HIV-positive, up from 22.4 percent in the previous year.

#### "HIV on Rise in India, Report Says"

Orlando Sentinel ([www.orlandosentinel.com](http://www.orlandosentinel.com)) (03/21/01) P. A9

The Indian government reported Tuesday that there were an estimated 3.86 million people infected with HIV in the country last year, up from 3.7 million in 1999. According to the department of health, there were approximately 3.5 million HIV-infected individuals in India in 1998.

#### "AIDS Panic in China Leads to Draconian Measures"

Wall Street Journal ([www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com)) (03/23/01) P. B1; Chang, Leslie

Efforts to fight the AIDS epidemic in China are coming largely in the form of bills limiting the rights of HIV-infected individuals--a situation that has doctors and activists concerned. The fear is that the new measures could increase discrimination against people with HIV or AIDS; discourage individuals from getting tested for HIV; and play on the belief that AIDS can be eliminated by punishing those infected, rather than informing the public. A law in Beijing City, for example, stipulates that the bodies of people who died from HIV or AIDS must be cremated immediately and not moved out of the city. In Hebei Province, the law states that "those with sexually transmitted diseases who have not been cured cannot join the military, enter school, recruit workers or get married, cannot obtain permission to have a child, cannot work in child care, food-related, or service industries, etc., and those already in those fields must be transferred." Recent government estimates indicate that China could have 10 million cases of HIV infection by 2010, up from 500,000 now, unless aggressive measures are taken. Experts note that because the country is at a relatively early stage with the disease, such efforts could be quite successful.

#### "AIDS Obstacles Overwhelm a Small South African Town"

with people they care about. The agency has received thousands of phone calls about medical myths since 1999. In an effort to respond to the calls and the myths, the CDC is fighting back by devoting a page on its Web site, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), just to myth debunking. Barbara Mikkelsen of the Valley Folklore Society, [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com), says health threats are by far the most tantalizing emails myths yet. She suggests that people are "grasping at straws" to explain "a growing sense of vulnerability" in the world.

#### "Program Reduces Risky Behavior in Youths with HIV"

Reuters Health Information Services ([www.reutershealth.com](http://www.reutershealth.com))  
(03/13/01); Cooke, Michele Beaulieu

Researchers in California report in the American Journal of Public Health (2001;91:400-405) that a new program called "Act Safe" has been proven to reduce risky sexual behavior among HIV-positive teenagers. Dr. Mary Jane Rotheram-Borus and colleagues from the University of California at Los Angeles studied the behaviors of 310 HIV-infected teenagers during the two-part intervention project, tracking risky behaviors associated with HIV transmission and then following-up with the students after six months. The "Act Safe" portion of the project focused on educating teens about changing risky behaviors and resulted in significant decreases in sexual encounters with HIV-negative partners, unprotected sexual encounters, and drug use. The "Stay Healthy" portion of the program--which counseled the teens about coping with HIV--demonstrated a better response from the girls than the boys as far as healthier lifestyle changes, although both sexes benefited from the social support issues.

#### "South Africa Resists Call for AIDS Emergency"

Washington Post ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)) (03/15/01) P. A1;  
Jeter, Jon

South African President Thabo Mbeki refused on Wednesday to declare AIDS a national emergency, a step that would have enabled his government to override foreign patents on AIDS drugs and purchase lower-cost, generic versions. Speaking to Parliament, Mbeki said he did not think it was necessary to use the World Trade Organization provision that allows the suspension of patents in cases of extreme national emergency. South Africa has an estimated 4.2 million people living with HIV, more than any other country in the world, and the nation has been under huge pressure to initiate the steps necessary to make AIDS drugs affordable and available. Yet the South African government is hesitant to take steps that might affect foreign investment or raise doubts about the nation's devotion to free trade activities. A law passed by the government four years ago that allowed the importation and distribution of generic

## MARCH 2001 CDC Monthly Update

"UCLA Study Shows AIDS-Intervention Programs Curb Risky Sex and Drug Use by HIV-Positive Youth"

Postnet Online ([www.postnet.com](http://www.postnet.com)) (02/28/01)

A recent study from the University of California at Los Angeles found that HIV-infected youths participating in an AIDS-intervention program voluntarily decreased their high-risk sexual behavior by 82 percent and their drug use by one-third. The findings, reported in the March edition of the American Journal of Public Health, offer some encouragement in the effort to curtail the spread of HIV among young people. During the study, researchers worked to assist participants maintain emotional wellness, take responsibility for their health, and reduce their high-risk behaviors. The "Stay Healthy" part of the program involved 12 sessions aimed at helping participants change their behaviors. The teens were introduced to modified behavior routines designed to keep them healthy, and they were educated about how to cope with their HIV status, disclosure issues, and medical-decision making. The second section, called "Act Safe," targeted the prevention of disease transmission to others.

"Teenage AIDS Rate in South Africa Easing--Official"

Reuters ([www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)) (03/02/01); Swindells, Steven

Ayanda Ntsaluba, director-general of South Africa's Department of Health, reported Thursday that teenagers in the country appear to be practicing safer sex, with a slow down in HIV infection rates among teens and also declining syphilis rates. Nearly half the nation's population is less than 20 years old, and the average age when South African teens start having intercourse is 12. While a change in the attitude toward sex would indicate increased use of condoms and greater awareness of the risks of unprotected sex, Ntsaluba also noted that the infection rate among adults ages 25 to 35 continues to increase. Pretoria is expected to release its annual report on HIV rates at public antenatal clinics later this month.

"CDC Targeting Internet Epidemic of Medical Hoaxes"

Boston Globe ([www.boston.com/globe](http://www.boston.com/globe)) (03/09/01) P. A1; Barnard, Anne

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is fighting a new battle, this time against the imaginary disease and virus threats being spread through email warnings. The false health warnings about receiving a deadly virus through the mail or becoming infected with HIV by pumping gas are just two of the several stories that are being circulated via email by people who believe the stories and are concerned enough to share them