



Statistics

- More than 35 million people are living with HIV; over 3 million children under the age of 15 years (2012)
- More than 75 million people infected since the beginning of HIV's existence; over 36 million have died of AIDS (2012)

HIV transmission

- HIV is a virus that leads to the deterioration of the immune system by infecting human immune system cells and destroying or impairing their function.
- The risk of transmission to another person is highest in the period right after initial infection.
- HIV is transmitted through completely preventable means: unprotected sex with an HIV-positive person; using HIV-contaminated needles/syringes; from HIV-positive mother to her child in pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding; and blood transfusion with HIV-contaminated blood.

Concentrated epidemic

- Affects specific vulnerable groups, such as sex workers, men who have sex with men, and injecting drug users
Example: epidemics in U.S., Thailand

Generalized epidemic

- Transmission is mainly outside vulnerable groups
- Usually passed through heterosexual vaginal intercourse
Example: epidemics in Africa

In developing key prevention strategies, determining the type of epidemic is critical because each type requires different responses. In generalized epidemics, interventions targeted at high-risk behaviors usually do not work.

A person-centered response to HIV/AIDS through prevention and treatment

- based on a holistic perception of the person's needs in prevention, treatment, care, and support
- has as its focus the intrinsic dignity of the person
- effective because it responds to the capacity of the person to make responsible choices

Prevention: Behavior change through reduction in multiple concurrent partnerships and delay of sexual debut

Reduction in multiple concurrent partnerships

- Concurrent partnerships create sexual networks that link many people within a community, making even people with low-risk behavior vulnerable to HIV infection.
- Because during acute phase people have high HIV loads and often do not know they are infected, transmission can spread easily to multiple partners and then on to others.
- Mutual fidelity severs the networks, containing HIV and preventing new sexual transmissions.

Delay of early sexual debut

- Early sexual debut is a significant indicator of prevalent HIV infection; young people who initiate sex early are at a greater risk of contracting STIs and HIV.
- Young women are more susceptible to contracting HIV than young men due to behavioral and biological factors.
- A delay in the onset of sexual activity is associated with a decline in HIV prevalence.

Treatment: Access to antiretroviral therapy is the cornerstone

Antiretroviral drugs (ARVs)

- ARVs decrease mortality rates while increasing life expectancy by suppressing viral replication and progression of the disease.
- But 9 million people still lack access to ARVs.

Mother-to-child transmission

- Initiation of ARVs during pregnancy reduces to almost zero perinatal transmission and transmission during breastfeeding regardless of how advanced the mother's HIV is.

UNAIDS' failure in promoting condom use over other risk prevention strategies

- UNAIDS is focused on harm reduction strategies (condoms, sterile needles, negotiation), instead of on changing the underlying behaviors that put people at a high risk of contracting HIV.
- UNAIDS, as a global policy-setter, must recognize that each country's HIV/AIDS epidemic is distinctive in terms of drivers, vulnerabilities, aggravating factors, and populations affected, and therefore the responses from both the international community and the nations themselves must be uniquely tailored to each particular situation, according to the needs of each country, and sensitive to cultural context.

For more information, see the World Youth Alliance's HIV/AIDS White Paper (July 2012), available at www.wya.net/research.