

AIDS in America – 2015 update

Due to an HIV outbreak among needle users, Indiana governor, Mike Pence, declared a public health emergency for Scott County, a rural area 30 miles north of Louisville. On April 10th, there were 95 confirmed cases of HIV and 11 preliminary positive cases. On May 5th, the count has risen to 140.

The state has waived its ban on needle exchange programs and is currently encouraging resident drug users to step forward and exchange their needles. Needless to say, few are taking the government up on the offer and critics say the program is not being run according to best practices. Lack of information and misinformation on HIV continues, and infection continues to spread.

Beginning of HIV/AIDS in America

Although it is believed HIV/AIDS started in Africa, AIDS was first identified in the United States. In 1981, a number of young, white men were contracting rare diseases, a rare type of pneumonia (Pneumocystis Pneumonia Carinii) and a rare type of cancer (Kaposi's Sarcoma). Common denominators included a devastated immune system, opportunistic and rare infections, and a common sexual orientation – the young men were gay. In 1982, cases among heterosexuals were identified, with half of them being confirmed IV drug users. The next identified group were persons with hemophilia who had received blood products.

In 1984, the virus, HIV, was identified as the cause of AIDS. Our government did not launch an AIDS education campaign until 1988. Discrimination is blamed for much of the spread of the disease due to an early attitude of self-righteous belief that the disease would remain limited to gay men and IV drug users, thus eliminating “undesirables” from our society.

By 1986, when a heat treatment was developed to kill HIV in

blood products, it is estimated that half of the Americans with hemophilia had already contracted HIV from our blood supply.

HIV Prevalence

Prevalence of a disease is the number of persons living with the disease at any given time. The 2011 estimate of HIV infection in the United States was 1, 201,100 of which 160,300 (14%) were yet to be diagnosed.

Current HIV Infection Stats

Today the CDC reports an estimated 50,000 new cases of HIV infection are diagnosed each year. The latest data was obtained in 2010 with 47,500 new cases that year. Two-thirds of these cases were reported within the gay community. Black/African Americans comprise the second most infected population with 8 times the infection rate of Caucasian Americans.

Gay and bisexual youth, aged 13 to 24, show a 22% increase in estimated new infections from 2008 to 2010, according to the CDC. This age group accounts for 26% of annual new cases. Unfortunately, 50% of these infected youth do not know they are infected. Rates of infection for young black/African Americans and Hispanic/Latino young men are the highest.

Conclusion

Safe sexual practices could eradicate this disease, but this will never happen as long as so many remain uneducated about HIV and how it spreads.

Further Reading:

- *How Viruses Work and How to Prevent Them Naturally*

- *Make Your Immune System Bulletproof with These Natural Remedies*

Sources:

- *HIV Outbreak in Indiana Tops 100 Cases – NBC News*
- *History of HIV & AIDS in the U.S.A. – AVERT*
- *Rural Indiana Struggles to Contend With H.I.V. – Outbreak- N.Y. Times*
- *HIV Among Youth – CDC*