**amfAR MSM Report Coverage from AIDS 2008 Conference**

August 11, 2008

**Coverage of amfAR MSM Report:**

* [Washington Post: Early Lessons Forgotten, AIDS Conference Told](#washingtonpost)

# [Reuters: Gay, Bisexual Men Still At High Risk For HIV: Study](#Reutersaugust4)

* + [Reuters Latin America: Hombres gay y bisexuales aún corren alto riesgo de VIH: estudio](#reuters)
  + [Reuters Italia: Aids, secondo studio per gay e bisessuali alto rischio contagio](#reutersitalia)
* [Bloomberg: AIDS Prevention Focus Returns to Gay Men at Mexico Conference](#bloomberg)
* [AP: Global AIDS prevention gives short shrift to gays](#AP)
* [Sydney Morning Herald: Throwing money at HIV has left many men at grave risk](#sydneymornherald)
* [Voice of America: Dramatic Rise in HIV Infection Reported Among Men who have Sex with Men](#VOA)
* [El Mundo: El sexo entre hombres sale del armario... pero aún no está sobre la mesa](#elmundo)
* [China Daily: Study: gay, bisexual men still at high risk for HIV](#chinadaily)

# [La Jornada (Mexico): Hombres que tienen sexo con hombres, los más afectados por el sida, revela estudio](#jornadamsm)

* [Prensa Latina: Hombres que tienen sexo con hombres, más afectados por SIDA](#prensalatina)
* [Kaiser Daily: MSM Remain at High Risk for HIV; Official Data Lacking, Report Finds](#kaisermsm)
* [Financial Times: US group takes Aids fight to the prisons of Mexico](#FTMSMMexicanPrisons)
* [Times of India: India's fight against AIDS to focus on gays](#timesofindia)
* [NPR: Many Nations Lack HIV Prevention For Gay Men](#NPR2)
* [The Canberra Times (Australia): Throwing money at HIV has left many men at grave risk](#canberra)
* [Montreal Gazette: Some governments are making the AIDS crisis worse](#montrealgazette)
* [Kaiser Daily Report: Newspapers Examine Challenges in HIV Prevention Among MSM](#kaiserdailyreportnewspaper)
* [eFluxMedia: Prevalence of HIV Infection among MSM Key Topic at the AIDS Conference](#efluxprevalencehighmsm)

**Other amfAR Coverage:**

* [Financial Times: When the drugs don't work](#FTwhendrugsdontwork)

# [Seattle Times: Study: HIV rate 40% higher than thought](#SeattleTimesaltman)

* [eFlux Media: HIV Infection Rate Higher Than Previously Estimated](#eflux)
* [The Med Guru: Sample This-AIDS Affects More Than 56,000 In US Every Year!](#med)
* [eFluxMedia: Daily Doses of Growth Hormone May Aid HIV Patients](#efluxdailyhghdoses)

**Washington Post: Early Lessons Forgotten, AIDS Conference Told**

By Ceci Connolly  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Thursday, August 7, 2008; A02

MEXICO CITY, Aug. 6 -- Twenty-five years after AIDS was branded the "gay plague," the virus is again exacting a disproportionate toll on men who have sex with men, not only in the United States but also in countries where the epidemic is just emerging.

Globally, men who engage in homosexual relations are 19 times as likely to contract HIV as the rest of the population, [according to data](http://www.amfar.org/cgi-bin/iowa/news/press.html?record=199) released at the International AIDS Conference. Here in [Mexico](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/countries/mexico.html?nav=el), men who have sex with men are 109 times as likely as others to develop HIV, while in the United States, 53 percent of new infections in 2006 were in gay and bisexual men.

Homophobia, biology and misplaced confidence that AIDS has become a treatable chronic illness are contributing to a disturbing flashback among scientists and activists, who say much of the world appears to have forgotten the early lessons of the AIDS epidemic.

"We have come full circle," Michel Sidibe, assistant secretary general of the United Nations, said in an interview. "In the beginning, gay men in places like San Francisco and New York proved we could do prevention. When we moved from that and started talking about the broad scope of the epidemic, suddenly men who have sex with men became marginalized."

When the mysterious AIDS virus first appeared in the 1980s, it was labeled a homosexual disease. Conservative religious activists suggested the deadly illness was punishment for sexual behavior, and President Reagan remained silent.

Gay leaders, stunned by the rapid deaths of so many friends, mobilized an enormous grass-roots movement that sparked government action and, more significantly, effective prevention campaigns within the community. HIV infections among gay and bisexual men fell dramatically for a decade.

But since the mid-1990s, infection rates in gay men have been rising, especially in minority communities where homosexuality often still carries a powerful stigma.

The reasons for the rise include "prevention fatigue," confidence in new antiretroviral drugs, the use of methamphetamines and the arrival of a generation of young men who did not experience the ravages of the 1980s, said Richard Wolitski, acting director of the division of HIV/AIDS prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"They haven't lived through the earlier days of the epidemic," he said. To them, AIDS may appear to be a manageable illness.

Many gay men in the United States employ a prevention strategy known as "serosorting" in which they try to calculate risk based on their own and their partner's HIV status. The problem with that approach, Wolitski said, is that a large number of men do not know they are infected and unknowingly spread the disease.

Simple biology also contributes to the problem, Wolitski noted. "This is a virus that is transmitted more easily via anal sex than vaginal sex," he said.

What worries public health leaders is that many countries, particularly in the developing world, appear to be repeating the early patterns of the epidemic.

"The same kinds of stigma and discrimination and institutionalized homophobia that failed gay men in America is now failing men who have sex with men in the rest of the world," said Kevin Robert Frost, chief executive of Amfar, the Foundation for AIDS Research.

An Amfar survey of 128 countries found that men who engage in sex with other men are at greater risk of contracting HIV than others in the population. The term "men who have sex with men" emerged a decade ago to account for men who do not identify themselves as gay or bisexual but nevertheless have sex with other men.

In Asia, these men are 18 times as likely to contract HIV as the general population, while in Africa they are four times as likely to be infected, according to Amfar.

"We were surprised how extreme it was," said Chris Beyrer, an epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins University who helped prepare the report. "It is dramatically higher across all regions."

In many cases, AIDS rates among gay and bisexual men are "directly related to the institutionalization of homophobia," Frost said.

Eighty-five countries, including Jamaica, Belize, [India](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/countries/india.html?nav=el) and [Egypt](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/countries/egypt.html?nav=el), have laws criminalizing sex between men. It is punishable by death in seven countries, including Nigeria and [Saudi Arabia](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/countries/saudiarabia.html?nav=el), and by imprisonment in 76, according to the International Lesbian and Gay Association.

"It's difficult to provide services to men who have sex with men in countries where they don't acknowledge they exist," said Craig McClure, executive director of the conference sponsor, the International AIDS Society. Even if they do not face criminal penalties, gay men can experience stigma and discrimination that lead to low self-esteem and risky behavior such as unprotected sex.

"We live in an environment where nobody likes us," said Shivananda Khan, an activist who works with gay rights groups throughout East Asia. "We are told every day that we are horrible. Very few people love us. How do we cope with the constant, daily stigma? We drown our sorrows."

One of the hardest-hit regions is Latin America, which for the first time this week is hosting the biennial AIDS conference. Men who have sex with men in the region are 33 times as likely as others to be infected with HIV, the highest ratio found in the Amfar study.

"It is mostly the issue of machismo and homophobia," said Jorge Saavedra, head of Mexico's AIDS office.

Saavedra has emerged as one of the stars of the Mexico City conference and is credited with helping spotlight the issue of HIV in gay men this week.

His speech to delegates Tuesday was the first time since 1993 that the topic of men who have sex with men was featured in a plenary session. Though he has not concealed his sexual orientation, Saavedra made a point of spotlighting it, announcing to the crowd that he is gay, married and HIV-positive.

"It is not wrong to be gay," he said. "What is wrong is the need to be hidden."

[Back to top](#_top)

# Reuters: Gay, Bisexual Men Still At High Risk For HIV: Study

August 4, 2008

By REUTERS

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Men who have sex with men are 19 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population, yet are ignored in many countries, an AIDS group said in a study released on Monday.

The report from the American Foundation for AIDS Research or AMFAR suggests the group originally at most risk of the fatal and incurable virus -- gay and bisexual men -- remain at highest risk, even as the pandemic has broadened to affect women and children.

AMFAR trawled through 128 country reports submitted to the [United Nations](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_nations/index.html?inline=nyt-org) AIDS agency UNAIDS to find that 44 percent of those countries failed to provide any data on gay or bisexual men.

The study, released at a global AIDS conference in Mexico City, concluded that governments and global health agencies have failed to address the growing HIV epidemic among men who have sex with other men -- referred to widely among AIDS experts as MSM.

Despite a unanimous commitment that all U.N. member countries made in 2001 to monitor HIV among high-risk groups, the report found that 71 percent of countries said they did not have any information on the percentage of gay and bisexual men reached by HIV prevention programs.

"The failure of the Global Fund (for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria), PEPFAR (the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), The [World Bank](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/w/world_bank/index.html?inline=nyt-org), and the world's other global health bodies to devote significant resources toward reducing HIV rates among MSM is indefensible," said AMFAR CEO Kevin Frost.

"These organizations have policies on women, drug users, migration -- but not one of them has a comprehensive policy on MSM."

The AMFAR report identified Kenya, Jamaica, Benin, Thailand, and Ghana as the countries with the highest reported percentage of gay and bisexual men infected with HIV.

Although data was scarce, the report found that men who had sex with other men were 18 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population in Asia and at least four times more likely in Africa.

In Latin America, gay and bisexual men were 33 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population. In Bolivia, they were 179 times more likely to be infected.

In Mexico, one study found 26 percent of men who had sex with men had HIV, the highest rate of any country in Latin America. Though these men make up nearly a quarter of those infected with HIV in Latin America, MSM programs receive less than one percent of total HIV/AIDS spending in the region.

Criminalization of sexual activity between males may be a major driver of the epidemic in many countries, the report concluded. Seven of 10 countries with the highest reported HIV rates among gay and bisexual men criminalize homosexuality.

Globally, 86 countries criminalize sexual activity between males. In seven countries, sexual activity between males is punishable by death. This institutionalized stigma and discrimination frequently prevents men from accessing even basic HIV services, the report said.

(Editing by Maggie Fox and Todd Eastham)

[Back to top](#_top)

**Reuters Latin America: Hombres gay y bisexuales aún** **corren alto riesgo de VIH: estudio**

lunes 4 de agosto de 2008 14:12 GYT  Imprimir[-] Texto [+] Por Tan Ee Lyn

MEXICO DF (Reuters) - Los hombres que tienen sexo con otros hombres son en promedio 19 veces más propensos a infectarse con VIH que la población general, aunque este mayor riesgo es ignorado en muchos países, señaló un grupo especialista en sida en un estudio publicado el lunes.

El informe de la Fundación Estadounidense de Investigación sobre el Sida (AMFAR por su sigla en inglés) sugiere que esta comunidad originalmente en mayor riesgo de contraer el virus letal e incurable -los varones gay y bisexuales- sigue estando en mayor peligro, aún cuando la epidemia se ha expandido también entre las mujeres y los niños.

AMFAR revisó reportes de 128 países solicitados por la agencia de Naciones Unidas sobre el sida, ONUSIDA, y halló que el 44 por ciento de esos estados no logra brindar información sobre el virus a los hombres homosexuales y bisexuales.

El estudio, dado a conocer durante una conferencia global sobre sida que se desarrolla esta semana en México, concluyó que los gobiernos y las agencias de salud internacionales fracasan a la hora de controlar la creciente epidemia de VIH entre los varones que tienen sexo con otros varones.

Pese al compromiso unánime de todos los miembros de Naciones Unidas realizado en el 2001 para controlar el VIH en los grupos de alto riesgo, el informe reveló que el 71 por ciento de los países dijo no tener ningún dato sobre el porcentaje de hombres gay y bisexuales a los que llegan los programas de prevención del virus del sida.

"El fracaso del Fondo Global (contra el sida, la tuberculosis y la malaria), el PEPFAR (Plan de Emergencia de Alivio del Sida del Presidente de Estados Unidos), el Banco Mundial y otros organismos mundiales de salud en brindar recursos para reducir las tasas de VIH (en esos hombres) es inexcusable," dijo Kevin Frost, presidente ejecutivo de AMFAR.

"Estas organizaciones tienen políticas para las mujeres, los consumidores de drogas, los inmigrantes, pero ninguna de ellas cuenta con una política exhaustiva para los MSM (sigla en inglés con que se denomina a los hombres que tienen sexo con otros hombres)," añadió Frost.

El reporte de la AMFAR identificó a Kenia, Jamaica, Benín, Tailandia y Ghana como los países que informaron los porcentajes más altos de hombres gay y bisexuales infectados con VIH.

Aunque los datos son escasos, el informe reveló que los hombres que tenían sexo con otros hombres eran 18 veces más propensos a infectarse con el virus que la población general en Asia y al menos cuatro veces más proclives en Africa.

En América Latina, los varones gay o bisexuales eran 33 veces más propensos a infectarse con el virus del sida que la población general. En Bolivia, las posibilidades son 179 veces mayores.

En México, un estudio halló que el 26 por ciento de los hombres tienen sexo con otros hombres, la mayor tasa de la región latinoamericana.

A pesar de que estos hombres representan casi un cuarto de las personas infectadas con VIH en América Latina, los programas para los MSM reciben menos del 1 por ciento del total del dinero destinado a la lucha contra el VIH/sida en la región.

La criminalización de la actividad sexual entre hombres sería una de las mayores causas del aumento de la epidemia en muchos países, concluyó el informe.

Siete de los 10 países con las tasas más altas de VIH entre los varones gay y bisexuales criminalizan la homosexualidad.

En todo el mundo, 86 países consideran un crimen la actividad sexual entre hombres. En siete de ellos, el delito acarrea la pena de muerte.

Esta discriminación y estigma suele impedir que los hombres accedan a los servicios básicos para prevenir y tratar el VIH, añadió el reporte.

(Editada en español por Ana Laura Mitidieri)

[Back to top](#_top)

**Reuters Italia: Aids, secondo studio per gay e bisessuali alto rischio contagio**

martedì, 5 agosto 2008 10.32

Versione per stampa

CITTA' DEL MESSICO (Reuters) - La probabilità che i maschi omosessuali contraggano il virus dell'Hiv è di 19 volte maggiore rispetto al resto della popolazione, eppure -- in moltissimi paesi -- il problema non viene affrontato.

A denunciarlo è il rapporto della American Foundation for Aids Research (Amfar), secondo il quale il gruppo originariamente più a rischio di infezione -- gay e bisessuali -- lo è ancora, anche se il contagio si è comunque allargato a donne e bambini.

Amfar ha analizzato i rapporti inviati da 128 paesi all'agenzia dell'Onu che si occupa di Aids, la Unaids, e ha scoperto che il 44% dei paesi non forniscono dati che riguardano gay e bisessuali.

Secondo lo studio, diffuso in occasione della conferenza mondiale sull'Hiv in Messico, i governi e le agenzie che si occupano di sanità a livello mondiale non sono riuscite ad affrontare il problema delle crescenti infezioni tra gli omosessuali maschi.

Nonostante l'impegno comune che tutti i membri Onu hanno sottoscritto nel 2001 per monitorare il contagio da Hiv nei gruppi a rischio, il rapporto denuncia che il 71% dei paesi non conosce la percentuale di gay e bisessuali raggiunti dalle campagne di prevenzione.

"Il fallimento (di diversi organismi internazionali) di devolvere risorse per ridurre il contagio da Hiv (tra gay e bisex) è imperdonabile", ha commentato il presidente Kevin Frost.

Secondo l'Amfar sono Kenya, Giamaica, Benin, Thailandia e Ghana i paesi con la maggior percentuale di gay e bisessuali malati di Aids.

[Back to top](#_top)

**Bloomberg: AIDS Prevention Focus Returns to Gay Men at Mexico Conference**

By Shannon Pettypiece and John Lauerman

Aug. 4 (Bloomberg) -- Discrimination against men who have sex with men must end, and countries must gear up prevention programs against AIDS in this high-risk group, the secretary general of the United Nations said yesterday.

Speaking at the opening ceremonies for the International AIDS Conference in [Mexico City](http://www.aids2008.0rg), UN chief [Ban Ki-moon](http://search.bloomberg.com/search?q=Ban+Ki-moon&site=wnews&client=wnews&proxystylesheet=wnews&output=xml_no_dtd&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&filter=p&getfields=wnnis&sort=date:D:S:d1) was one of several world leaders and health officials who spoke about the need for targeting the epidemic among homosexual men.

[Margaret Chan](http://search.bloomberg.com/search?q=Margaret+Chan&site=wnews&client=wnews&proxystylesheet=wnews&output=xml_no_dtd&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&filter=p&getfields=wnnis&sort=date:D:S:d1), head of the World Health Organization's China unit, said health officials in all nations, including the U.S., need to acknowledge setbacks in a group that pioneered the earliest response to the disease. In the U.S., infections among gay men have risen 75 percent in 15 years, according to a [report](http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2008/r080803.htm) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

``We need to engage them, we need to take care of them, we should not forget about them,'' Chan said, referring to the homosexual community worldwide.

Mexican President [Felipe Calderon Hinojosa](http://search.bloomberg.com/search?q=Felipe+Calderon+Hinojosa&site=wnews&client=wnews&proxystylesheet=wnews&output=xml_no_dtd&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&filter=p&getfields=wnnis&sort=date:D:S:d1), former Botswana President [Festus Mogae](http://search.bloomberg.com/search?q=Festus+Mogae&site=wnews&client=wnews&proxystylesheet=wnews&output=xml_no_dtd&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&filter=p&getfields=wnnis&sort=date:D:S:d1) and President of St. Kitts and Nevis Denzil Douglas each called for the end of discrimination against gay men in a news conference at the meeting. Mogae and Douglas said they'll work with leaders in Africa and the Caribbean to create new prevention programs.

More than a quarter of gay men in these regions, including Jamaica, Kenya, and Ghana, are infected, according to the United Nations. Despite a quarter-century of activism and awareness, gay populations have been overlooked because of discrimination and criminalization in some countries, said [Peter Piot](http://search.bloomberg.com/search?q=Peter+Piot&site=wnews&client=wnews&proxystylesheet=wnews&output=xml_no_dtd&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&filter=p&getfields=wnnis&sort=date:D:S:d1), the executive director of New York-based UNAIDS, the agency that coordinates care and research.

`Against the Law'

``In many countries homosexual activity is against the law,'' Piot said in an interview at the meeting. ``It is underground and impossible to organize these programs.''

About 33 million people are infected with the AIDS virus worldwide, and 2.7 million of them contracted HIV, the virus that causes the disease, last year, according to a report from UNAIDS. The number of deaths dropped by about 10 percent to 2 million, the report said.

Most of the 179 countries reporting to the United Nations on the epidemic make no mention of the virus in homosexual men, said Kevin Frost, chief executive officer of AmFAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research. AmFAR tomorrow is scheduled to release a report at the conference on the prevalence of HIV in gay men worldwide.

Homosexuality is illegal and punished in many African countries, making it extremely difficult to recognize men at risk and provide them with prevention, Frost said. In low- and middle-income countries, the rate of infection in men who have sex with men is 13 percent, he said.

Broad Message

In the U.S., the government has pushed a broad message targeting everyone, rather than focusing on the hardest hit populations, said Phil Curtis, director of government affairs at [AIDS Project Los Angeles](http://www.apla.org). He said there needs to be at least another $1 billion in prevention funding and more precise messaging to address the gay community.

The failure to slow HIV in gay men puts the U.S. alongside countries in Asia and Africa that aren't confronting the disease in this population, Frost said.

``What the CDC data did was illuminate just how poorly we're doing,'' he said today in an interview at the conference. ``We're doing a lousy job of recognizing the depth of the epidemic in men having sex with men, and targeting our resources so we can change the trajectory of the epidemic.''

In the U.S., 72 percent of infections in males are in those who engage in sex with other men, according to AmFAR. Especially hard hit are gay black men, of whom about 46 percent are infected, according to a 2005 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

To contact the reporter on this story: [Shannon Pettypiece](http://search.bloomberg.com/search?q=Shannon+Pettypiece&site=wnews&client=wnews&proxystylesheet=wnews&output=xml_no_dtd&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&filter=p&getfields=wnnis&sort=date:D:S:d1) in Mexico City at [spettypiece@bloomberg.net](mailto:spettypiece@bloomberg.net); [John Lauerman](http://search.bloomberg.com/search?q=John+Lauerman&site=wnews&client=wnews&proxystylesheet=wnews&output=xml_no_dtd&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&filter=p&getfields=wnnis&sort=date:D:S:d1) in Mexico City at [jlauerman@bloomberg.net](mailto:jlauerman@bloomberg.net).

[Back to top](#_top)

**AP: Global AIDS prevention gives short shrift to gays**

August 9, 2008

By Julie Watson

MEXICO CITY (AP) -- Jorge Saavedra's moment of truth came in the middle of an impassioned speech to 5,000 people about the paltry amount of money being spent to stop the spread of AIDS among gay men.

The Mexican federal official paused, then said publicly for the first time that he was gay.

As he held up a photo of himself with his partner, the crowd applauded wildly. Afterward, men from Africa and India congratulated him with tears in their eyes.

"They told me that I was a hero, and that they wished they could do the same in their countries," said Saavedra, who is infected with HIV and also heads the AIDS prevention program in a country where many gay men live in denial.

Saavedra's coming out on Tuesday at the International AIDS Conference sent a powerful message to the world: Homophobia must be stamped out if AIDS is to be controlled.

Fewer people are dying from AIDS, but new HIV infections among gay and bisexual men in many countries are rising at alarming rates.

Yet less than 1 percent of the $669 million reported in global prevention spending targets men who have sex with men, according to UNAIDS figures from 2006, the latest available data.

UNAIDS says these men receive the lowest coverage of HIV prevention services of any at-risk population. And experts say discrimination has driven gay and bisexual men in developing nations underground - turning them into one of the epidemic's hardest groups to reach. From Mexico to India, a surprising number of men who have sex with men insist they are not gay, and in many countries, governments still refuse to admit homosexuality exists.

"It's very difficult to provide services to men who have sex with men in countries that don't acknowledge they exist or criminalize them if they do exist," said Craig McClure, executive director of International AIDS Society, which organized the conference.

In 86 nations, homosexual sex is considered a crime, and in seven countries it is punishable by death, according to the Foundation for AIDS Research, known as Amfar.

During the conference's inauguration, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged nations "to follow Mexico's bold example and pass laws against homophobia."

In 2003, Mexico banned discrimination based on sexual orientation, and it has opened what it calls homophobic-free health clinics. The government has a national campaign that includes radio spots with mothers accepting their gay sons. Saavedra's program has earmarked 10 percent of its $12 million budget toward prevention among gay and bisexual men.

Worldwide, few developing nations check the rates of HIV infection among men who have sex with men, but researchers who have surveyed some of these countries say they are finding the rates are nearly twice that of the general adult population.

"This fight needs to be driven by epidemiologists" who urge making this high-risk group a priority, not only for the human rights argument, but for the public health argument, said Chris Beyrer, director of the Center for Public Health and Human Rights at Johns Hopkins University. "It's a virus so you need to put the money where the virus is."

Gay and bisexual men are 19 times more likely to become infected with HIV than the general adult population, according to Amfar, which collected data on these men in 128 countries. In Mexico, this group is 109 times more likely to acquire HIV. To date, 57 percent of the HIV diagnoses in Mexico are from unprotected sex between men.

Thailand is seeing "an emerging epidemic of really unbelievable proportions" among its gay and bisexual men after being held up as an example for its success with a massive condom campaign that curbed HIV's spread among sex workers, drug users and migrants, said Kevin Frost, Amfar's chief executive officer.

Prevalence of HIV among gay and bisexual Thai men was more than 15 percent this year compared to 1.4 percent for the general adult population, according to Amfar. Frost said the country's prevention programs ignored one of its most vulnerable groups.

"These men believed they were not at risk because they were not having sex with sex workers or women, which is what the campaign focused on," Frost said. "That scenario is being played out across the developing world."

Complicating matters is that in countries from Latin America to Southeast Asia, many men who have sex with men, insist they are not gay. More than 30 percent of Latin American men who reported having sex with men said they also had unprotected sex with women, according to UNAIDS. Many are married.

"Everybody knows somebody like that," Saavedra, 48, said. "Instead of saying they are gay, it's easier for them to justify their behavior. They say they were drunk and they were really sexually excited and willing to have sex with whomever."

Some have beaten up transvestites after having sex with them because they are ashamed of themselves, experts say.

Even governments deny these men exist. Last year, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said at Columbia University in New York, "In Iran we don't have homosexuals like in your country."

In Malawi, that country's first organization working on behalf of gay men was created in 2006 with the backing of World Bank officials and other international agencies.

Called the Centre for the Development of People, the group surveyed 100 gay men about discrimination to prove to the government that such men existed in Malawi. Homosexual sex is punishable up to 14 years in prison in the African country.

The organization also found through testing 200 gay men that about 21 percent carried HIV compared with 12 percent for the general adult population.

"This means that we are not moving ahead with the fight against AIDS," said Gift Trapence, the organization's director who has received e-mails threatening hanging.

AIDS activists say they avoid using words like "homosexual" or "gay" and instead use the label "men who have sex with men," or MSM, so their work is not impeded by the stigma.

Ashok Row Kavi said he has learned the importance of carefully choosing his words in India, where he started one of the country's first organizations to work with gay and bisexual men.

The Humsafar Trust found nearly 14 percent of the gay and bisexual men it surveyed in 1999 were infected with HIV. Kavi said when he told India's AIDS officials they "totally panicked because until now they believed these men did not exist."

But last year they added a definition of men who have sex with men to their health planning program to start prevention campaigns. The definition includes married men.

Kavi has been training health workers how to ask men if they have had gay sex and not scare them away.

"I tell them to say things like, 'There are many cultures where men are very close to men. Are you one of these men?'" he said. "These questions have to be sensitive," especially in India, where sodomy is illegal.

"That's why the word homosexual is not used," he said. "If anyone asks a man that, he will slap you."

[Back to top](#_top)

**Sydney Morning Herald: Throwing money at HIV has left many men at grave risk**

August 6, 2008

AS GOVERNMENTS around the world directed billions of dollars at programs that aimed to prevent HIV among general populations, a giant wave of infections moved like a tsunami through communities of gay men in Asia, Africa and Latin America, new figures show.

Men who have sex with men are now nearly 20 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population, yet they often receive as little as 1 per cent of global funding.

"The story is one of abject failure on the part of the institutions that have been charged with leading the response to HIV/AIDS at local, national and international levels," said the chief executive of the American Foundation for AIDS Research, Kevin Frost.

"Men who have sex with men continue to have little or no access to HIV services of any kind and as a result are plagued by high rates of infection."

Further data on the growing gay epidemic is due to be presented today at the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City.

Until recently, HIV was seen as a threat to everyone. Now experts, including the head of the World Health Organisation's HIV/AIDS programs, Kevin de Cock, acknowledge that outside sub-Saharan Africa, where infections are largely driven by heterosexual transmission, HIV is mostly confined to male-to-male transmission, injecting drug users and sex workers and their clients.

Yet governments have focused on generalised epidemics, while ignoring the groups most at risk.

"These epidemics are happening in countries where men who have sex with men are hidden, highly stigmatised populations … It is not just family and community stigma, it is also legal stigma," said the director of the Johns Hopkins University centre for public health and human rights, Chris Beyrer.

"More than 80 countries still have laws criminalising these behaviours … At least nine still have the death penalty for same-sex behaviour."

Thailand's epidemic is one of the most worrying, he warned. HIV prevalence in Thailand among men under 22 years of age who have sex with men rose from 12 per cent in 2003 to 22 per cent in 2006. The rate of HIV in Thailand's general population is less than 2 per cent.

In Africa, men who have sex with men are also 10 times more likely to have HIV than the general population, Professor Beyrer said, while the epidemic in South America is now mostly among gay men.

"There is an urgent need to respond to this, yet there is endless denial out there that these epidemics exist, and as a result they are seriously underfunded," Professor Beyrer said.

These men, in desperate need of health care and prevention services such as access to condoms and safe sex information, are either excluded from health services or exclude themselves for fear of discrimination.

Wipas Wimonsate, a medical researcher from Thailand's Ministry of Public Health, said a recent study of male-to-male transmission in the Bangkok area found rates of HIV had climbed from 17.3 per cent in 2003 to 30.7 per cent in 2007.

Alarmingly, "none of the men who tested positive to HIV during the study knew they were positive", he said.

Peter Piot, the outgoing executive director of the Joint United Nations Program on AIDS, said the epidemic in male-to-male transmission in Asia "is reminiscent of what was happening in Western countries such as the US and Australia in the 1980s".

"In just about every major Asian city for which we have data, there's been a significant increase of HIV among men who have sex with men," he said.

In Beijing, a 2005 survey of men who have sex with men showed 1 per cent were living with HIV. Two years later, that figure had gone up to 6 per cent.

In Karachi, infections among male sex workers doubled to 8 per cent in the same time frame.

While more people in low- and middle-income countries were on HIV treatment than ever before, Dr Piot said the epidemic continued to outstrip the response.

"For the 1 million people newly on treatment, there were 2.7 million newly infected - that's nearly 7500 people infected with HIV every day."

David Wilson, from the World Bank's global HIV/AIDS program, said: "We need to keep focused on injecting drug users and sex workers, but we also need to increase resources to men who have sex with men.

"In most concentrated epidemics we shouldn't be spending too much money on the general population, who are at low risk.

"Globally, we have been a bit slow to realise that."

But there is at least one sign that the times may be changing. The UN General Assembly special session on AIDS held its first ever session dedicated to the topic in June.

[Back to top](#_top)

**Voice of America: Dramatic Rise in HIV Infection Reported Among Men who have Sex with Men**

By Rosanne Skirble Mexico City

08 August 2008

A new report says the rate of HIV infections among men who have sex with men is many times greater than HIV infections in the general population. The report by the American Foundation for AIDS Research, or amfAR, was released this week at the 2008 International AIDS Conference in Mexico City. As VOA's Rosanne Skirble reports, activists are calling for targeted prevention programs and resources, especially in low- and middle- income countries, where the problem is most acute.

The amfAR report looks at the response of 128 countries to a 2006 United Nations initiative promoting universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care. But the amfAR report focuses on one HIV-infected population group: men who have sex with men, better known by the acronym MSM. The term describes this group's sexual behavior, and does not imply a homosexual lifestyle.

Report co-author and Johns Hopkins University epidemiologist Chris Beyrer says a review of all published HIV data shows that MSM makes up a large and growing portion of the AIDS epidemic in every region of the world.

"In Latin America, the odds ratio, the elevated risk compared to the general population, was 33 times. That was the most extreme that we saw."

Beyrer says in Asia, men who have sex with men "are 18 times more likely to have HIV infection, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, where general population rates (of HIV infection) are the highest, men who have sex with men were still more than three times more likely to have HIV than adults in the reproductive age population."

amfAR CEO Kevin Frost says criminalization of male-with-male sexual activities is driving the MSM epidemic in many countries, making it "enormously difficult" to reach the population.

Frost says 86 countries criminalize sex between men. In seven of those countries it is a capital offense. "That kind of institutionalized homophobia makes it very difficult to address the AIDS epidemic in those men."

The amfAR report links MSM prevalence to the failure of many countries to launch any kind of MSM-targeted response, as described in the U-N's 2006 call-to-action on HIV-AIDS programs. The report found that nearly half of all countries did not provide any data on MSM in response to the U.N. initiative. Among those nations that did, 71 percent have not launched any MSM-specific programs.

AmfAR's Kevin Frost says that must change. "History, if it has taught us anything about this epidemic, it has taught us that if we are going to be effective in our response, our response has to be comprehensive," Frost says, "meaning it has to address all the populations at risk, whether that is men who have sex with men or drug users or sex workers."

The report concludes that despite the upward trend in MSM-related HIV infections, resources to deal with them are scarce.

In Latin America, for example, where the AIDS conference is being held, MSM represents 25 percent of the people living with HIV. But MSM programs get less than one percent of total spending on HIV/AIDS prevention.

Co-author Chris Beyrer says it's essential that funding priorities be adjusted and is using the data to advocate for resources. "When you find this kind of a problem and you have the evidence, you want evidence-based approaches to prevention for these men: increased surveillance, health care access, antiretroviral therapy, condoms, and lubricants. And that has to be paid for."

Beyrer calls for stepped up efforts in this area by national governments and major donors like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the World Bank; and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR.

"The epidemiology has told us this is the most at risk group, and when we look at the services we see that they are … among the most underserved groups."

Beyrer says failure to provide health care, prevention and treatment for the MSM population amounts to nothing less than a denial of basic human rights to health care and, ultimately to life itself.

Download Radio Clip [Here](http://www.voanews.com/mediaassets/english/2008_08/Audio/Mp3/SKIRBLE%20AIDS%20MSM%20Report%20WEB%20Aug7.Mp3)

[Back to top](#_top)

**El Mundo: El sexo e****ntre hombres sale del armario... pero aún no está sobre la mesa**

5 August 2008

ISABEL F. LANTIGUA (enviada especial)

* Por primera vez, el sexo entre hombres protagoniza una sesión plenaria de la Conferencia
* Este colectivo tiene hasta 19 veces más riesgo de infectarse que la población general
* Pese al aumento del VIH en homosexuales, menos del 1% de los fondos se destina a ellos

MÉXICO D.F..- En una cita histórica, los hombres que tienen sexo con hombres, uno de los colectivos en los que más aumentan las infecciones por VIH, se han colado por primera vez en una sesión plenaria de una Conferencia Mundial de Sida, gracias al médico, activista y seropositivo Jorge Saavedra. Pero hasta aquí el logro. Porque, en la práctica, los homosexuales son los más olvidados de la lucha contra la epidemia, según destaca el primer informe sobre la cuestión, realizado en 128 países.

El documento presentado por amFAR, la Fundación para la Investigación del Sida, encuentra que estos varones tienen 19 veces más riesgo de infectarse que la población general. Eso, en el mejor de los casos. En América Latina, sede de esta Conferencia, estos hombres tienen 33 veces más posibilidades de contraer el virus y en países como Bolivia el riesgo es hasta 179 veces mayor. En México, la prevalencia del VIH en el colectivo es del 26%. Y, a pesar de estos datos y de que los homosexuales suponen casi la cuarta parte de los nuevos infectados, menos del 1% de los fondos destinados a programas de prevención se dirigen a ellos.

"El fracaso del Fondo Global, de los gobiernos, del Banco Mundial y de otras instituciones de salud a la hora de reducir la tasa de infección de VIH en los hombres que mantienen relaciones sexuales con otros hombres es indefendible e incomprensible", destaca el director de amFAR, Kevin Frost. "Todos estos organismos tienen políticas que se centran en las mujeres, en los usuarios de drogas, en los inmigrantes..., pero ninguno cuenta con una política para los hombres que se acuestan con otros", añade.

Una falta de atención que corroboran los propios afectados. Antonio Poveda, presidente de la FELGT (Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays y Transexuales) y presente en la Conferencia, declara a elmundo.es que "el colectivo sigue siendo invisible para los programas del sida". Según él, lo demuestra muy bien el hecho de que "ninguno de los líderes que hablaron en la sesión de apertura nombró a los homosexuales. Se centraron en las mujeres, en los niños, en la lucha contra el estigma..., pero nadie dijo nada de estos hombres". Poveda teme que como la situación siga así, como sigan creciendo las infecciones entre los varones con parejas masculinas, "vamos a tener una crisis muy grave en el colectivo". Y reclama a los gobiernos, principalmente al español, "que el VIH sea tratado como una cuestión de estado, como los accidentes de tráfico".

Historia de un fracaso

A pesar del compromiso alcanzado en 2001 por la ONU para monitorizar y seguir las infecciones por VIH en los grupos de alto riesgo, el 71% de los países afirma que no tiene información sobre el porcentaje de personas homosexuales a las que alcanzan los programas de prevención. Y casi la mitad de los lugares (el 44%) falla a la hora de recoger datos sobre el tema, según recoge el informe. Entre los países con mayor prevalencia de VIH en los hombres que tienen relaciones homosexuales figuran Kenia, Jamaica, Benin, Tailandia y Gana.

Pero los varones homosexuales no sólo están olvidados, sino que muchos de los gobiernos los criminalizan. Los datos de amFAR recogen que en 86 países las relaciones de hombres con hombres están consideradas como una grave ofensa. En 21 países, esta conducta es castigada con penas de hasta 10 años de prisión y, en siete países, con una alta cifra de contagios por VIH en el colectivo, amar a alguien del mismo sexo se castiga con la muerte. Esta criminalización es un factor que contribuye a la propagación de la epidemia.

"Desafortunadamente, cuando se trata de derechos humanos y VIH, está claro que en algún punto entre las declaraciones y la práctica los gobiernos perdieron el mensaje", explica Joanne Csete, de la Fundación Firelight, que ha participado en el informe.

[Back to top](#_top)

**China Daily: Study: gay, bisexual men still at high risk for HIV**

August 4, 2008

MEXICO CITY - Men who have sex with men are 19 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population, yet are ignored in many countries, an AIDS group said in a study released on Monday.

The report from the American Foundation for AIDS Research or AMFAR suggests the group originally at most risk of the fatal and incurable virus -- gay and bisexual men -- remain at highest risk, even as the pandemic has broadened to affect women and children.

AMFAR trawled through 128 country reports submitted to the United Nations AIDS agency UNAIDS to find that 44 percent of those countries failed to provide any data on gay or bisexual men.

The study, released at a global AIDS conference in Mexico City, concluded that governments and global health agencies have failed to address the growing HIV epidemic among men who have sex with other men -- referred to widely among AIDS experts as MSM.

Despite a unanimous commitment that all U.N. member countries made in 2001 to monitor HIV among high-risk groups, the report found that 71 percent of countries said they did not have any information on the percentage of gay and bisexual men reached by HIV prevention programs.

"The failure of the Global Fund (for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria), PEPFAR (the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), The World Bank, and the world's other global health bodies to devote significant resources toward reducing HIV rates among MSM is indefensible," said AMFAR CEO Kevin Frost.

"These organizations have policies on women, drug users, migration -- but not one of them has a comprehensive policy on MSM."

The AMFAR report identified Kenya, Jamaica, Benin, Thailand, and Ghana as the countries with the highest reported percentage of gay and bisexual men infected with HIV.

Although data was scarce, the report found that men who had sex with other men were 18 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population in Asia and at least four times more likely in Africa.

In Latin America, gay and bisexual men were 33 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population. In Bolivia, they were 179 times more likely to be infected.

In Mexico, one study found 26 percent of men who had sex with men had HIV, the highest rate of any country in Latin America. Though these men make up nearly a quarter of those infected with HIV in Latin America, MSM programs receive less than one percent of total HIV/AIDS spending in the region.

Criminalization of sexual activity between males may be a major driver of the epidemic in many countries, the report concluded. Seven of 10 countries with the highest reported HIV rates among gay and bisexual men criminalize homosexuality.

Globally, 86 countries criminalize sexual activity between males. In seven countries, sexual activity between males is punishable by death. This institutionalized stigma and discrimination frequently prevents men from accessing even basic HIV services, the report said.

[Back to top](#_top)

# La Jornada (Mexico): Hombres que tienen sexo con hombres, los más afectados por el sida, revela estudio

■ Estigma, discriminación y falta de programas oficiales de prevención, factores que aumentan el riesgo

Carolina Gómez Mena

Debido al estigma, la discriminación y al hecho de que a muchas autoridades gubernamentales no les interesa realmente dar prevención al sector de hombres que tienen sexo con otros hombres (HSH), estudios han mostrado que a escala internacional hay “18 veces más probabilidades” de que un hombre con esa práctica contraiga el VIH/sida que la población general, señaló Jeffrey Staton, director de la iniciativa HSH, de la asociación de investigación en VIH Amfar.

Staton y Jorge Saavedra López, este último director del Centro Nacional para la Prevención y Control del VIH/sida (Censida), apuntaron que en América Latina la probabilidad de contagio va de 30 a 33 veces, en África es de entre 3.5 y 4, mientras que en Asia oscila entre 18 y 19. Saavedra señaló que el porcentaje de HSH en cuanto a prevalencia de la pandemia es mucho mayor que la de la población en general. Por ejemplo –dijo–, en Francia es de 12.9 por ciento, en Italia 26.7, mientras que en México es de 15 por ciento, contra 0.3 de la población en general.

Staton consideró que en Latinoamérica los gobiernos y las autoridades sanitarios no han querido destinar los fondos necesarios para dar “respuesta efectiva” a este sector, y precisó que “han sido muy pocas las intervenciones en relación con el reparto de condones o de lubricantes a base de agua, los cuales son fundamentales para el sexo anal”.

Incluso, dijo que ni siquiera cumplen los compromisos establecidos a escala internacional para este sector, y que para este año –dentro del informe que debían dar– tenían que hablar de estas acciones, pero “90 de 128 países no mencionó qué porcentaje de los HSH está siendo abordado por programas de prevención; la mayoría no lo hizo porque no están haciendo nada, o es muy poco”.

Sostuvo que dicha actitud responde a “homofobia, estigma, la situación de las leyes y a que los mismos representantes de los programas de sida son homofóbicos”. En el caso México, dijo que aún falta mucho, pero que con la presencia de Saavedra en Censida ha habido “gran avance” en la materia.

En la plenaria Prevención de la transmisión sexual de VIH, una mirada desde el siglo XXI, en el contexto de la 17 Conferencia Internacional sobre VIH/sida, Saavedra lamentó que en 86 naciones se criminalicen las relaciones sexuales entre hombres, y manifestó la urgencia de que en México se establezca una “ley de igualdad de derechos” que complemente la existente contra la discriminación y tenga las facultades de sancionar a quienes limiten las oportunidades de igualdad y desarrollo de otros, como la prohibición de matrimonio entre personas del mismo sexo.

Sostuvo que se trata sólo de una idea lanzada al aire, sino “el sentir de muchas organizaciones de la sociedad civil, las que han propuesto e insistido en ella en diferentes instancias”. Agregó que es necesaria “cualquier ley que promueva la igualdad, sobre todo una que garantice la oportunidad de derechos para todos los mexicanos, independientemente de su raza, género y orientación sexual, y a partir de ahí tendrían que derivarse cambios en las restantes leyes”.

Aseguró que la homofobia “hace que la gente que tiene una orientación sexual diferente reciba menos el mensaje de prevención” del VIH/sida, y que incluso opte por tener un matrimonio heterosexual a fin de no ser señalado y rechazado, para no perder oportunidades de trabajo. Muchas veces “se casa porque es una persona rechazada, empujada a ello, estigmatizada, y está muerta de miedo”.

[Back to top](#_top)

**Prensa Latina: Hombres que tienen sexo con hombres, más afectados por SIDA**

México, 6 ago (PL) El grupo de hombres que tiene sexo con otros hombres (HSH) es hoy el más afectado por el VIH, asegura un estudio divulgado en la XVII Conferencia Internacional sobre SIDA, que sesiona en esta capital.

En la Plenaria, Prevención de la transmisión sexual del VIH, una mirada desde el siglo XXI, expertos reconocieron que en 86 naciones se criminalizan las relaciones sexuales entre varones.

La homofobia hace que quienes tienen una orientación sexual diferente reciban menos información y educación preventiva sobre los riesgos de contagio, e incluso muchos optan por realizar un matrimonio de conveniencia, agregaron.

Jorge Saavedra, director del Centro Nacional para la Prevención y Control del VIH/SIDA en México, destacó que en América Latina la probabilidad de infección en hombres es de 30 a 33 veces, en Africa entre 3,5 y cuatro, mientras en Asia, oscila entre 18 y 19.

El por ciento de prevalencia de la pandemia en HSH es mucho mayor que en la población general, acotó.

En la nación mexicana, es de 15 por ciento, contra 0,3 por ciento del resto de los habitantes, dijo Saavedra.

Por su parte, Jeffrey Staton, director de la iniciativa HSH de la Asociación de investigación en VIH Amfar, manifestó que en Latinoamérica no se detinan los fondos necesarios para dar una respuesta efectiva a ese sector.

Han sido muy pocas las estrategias destinadas a ese grupo, labores de prevención, reparto de condones, lubricantes a base de agua, por solo mencionar algunos, agregó.

Es que en ocasiones sucede que los propios representantes de los programas de SIDA son homofóbicos, resaltó.

[Back to top](#_top)

**Kaiser Daily: MSM Remain at High Risk for HIV; Official Data Lacking, Report Finds**

August 6, 2008

Government and global health agencies have failed to adequately address the HIV/AIDS epidemic among men who have sex with men, according to a report by the American Foundation for AIDS Research released Monday at the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City, Reuters reports. Although the disease has come to affect women and children as well, the researchers said MSM -- the demographic originally most at risk of HIV/AIDS -- remains at highest risk of infection. According to the report, research has found that MSM are 19 times more likely to be living with HIV than the general population, yet they are ignored in many countries.

Based on data from 128 countries submitted to UNAIDS, the report also found that 44% of countries failed to provide any data on MSM. According to the report, despite a unanimous commitment that all United Nations member countries made in 2001 to monitor HIV among high-risk groups, 71% of countries said they did not have any information on the percentage of MSM contacted by HIV prevention groups. According to the report, Benin, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya and Thailand are the countries with the highest reported HIV prevalence rates among MSM. Although data were scarce, the study found MSM were 33 times more likely to be living with HIV than the general population in Latin America, 18 times more likely in Asia and at least four times more likely in Africa.

AmfAR CEO Kevin Frost said the failure of the Global Fund To Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the World Bank and other global health organizations to allocate "significant resources toward reducing HIV rates among MSM is indefensible." Frost added, "These organizations have policies on women, drug users, migration -- but not one of them has a comprehensive policy on MSM." Joe Chan of AIDS Concern in Hong Kong said some new cases of HIV/AIDS among MSM were occurring even after they had undergone repeated HIV tests, and counseling. "These are clients who have undergone repeated tests and we find that they are still engaging in unsafe sexual behavior," Chan said (Lyn, Reuters, 8/5).

[Back to top](#_top)

**Financial Times: US group takes Aids fight to the prisons of Mexico**

By Andrew Jack in Mexico City

Published: August 9 2008

In a dank auditorium surrounded by high walls and razor wire in Mexico City, a dozen men in beige clothing are writing down the three most common ways they believe that HIV is transmitted. Tattoos, syringes and unprotected sex are among their answers.

"There are a lot of myths and not much information," says Guillermo Huerta, whose participation in a pioneering effort to increase Aids awareness earns him a little extra freedom during his sentence for robbery with violence. "We plant seeds of knowledge among a vulnerable population."

The programme in the Oriente prison, run by Population Services International, a US-based non-governmental organisation, highlights the continued challenges in tackling HIV, and helps explain why there were still 2.5m new infections around the world last year.

Despite its relative wealth, Mexico, like most other Latin American countries, spends a tiny amount on HIV and a very small proportion of that on one of the groups most at risk: men who have sex with men (MSM). Add in the extra stigma of dealing with prisoners, and many specialists believe the prospects of bringing the epidemic under control look distant.

A report released by Amfar, the American Foundation for Aids Research, at the international Aids conference in Mexico City, which ended yesterday, highlighted the fact that MSM accounts for a quarter of infections in Latin America, yet prevention programmes targeted at this group represent 1 per cent of government HIV spending.

MSM is not simply a politically correct term: it is part of a pattern of "opportunistic sex" around the world by many who do not consider themselves gay. Without recognising such subtleties, prevention programmes will be ineffective.

"It's a lie that there is no homosexual sex here. It is the norm," says Mr Huerta.

Kevin Frost, chief executive of Amfar, argues that in many developing countries, transmission via MSM is a "new epidemic" that has emerged in recent years as globalisation and the collapse of apartheid and communism, have fostered more liberal attitudes and travel.

But there is also a new aspect to the old epidemic among those historically most comprehensively targeted: gay men in the developed world. Data from the US Centers for Disease Prevention and Control and the UK Health Protection Agency show them to have among the highest rates of new infection. "There has been a fatigue of the safe sex message, and young men are not witness to deaths from the epidemic as they were 20 years ago," says Mr Frost.

[Back to top](#_top)

**Times of India: India's fight against AIDS to focus on gays**  
7 Aug 2008, 0201 hrs IST, Kounteya Sinha ,TNN

|  |
| --- |
|  |

MEXICO CITY: Men who have sex with men (MSMs) are posing to be India's greatest challenge in its fight against AIDS.   
  
An alarming increase in the number of gay men and a tremendous spike in the prevalence of HIV within this community has now made the country's National AIDS Control Organisation (Naco) decide to increase prevention interventions for this community by almost six times by the end of 2008.   
  
Naco estimates that India is home to 2.5 million MSMs of which 100,000 are at high risk of contracting HIV due to multi-partner and commercial sexual practices. Already, 15% of this community have got infected with the deadly disease. The world’s top political leaders and scientists, attending the International AIDS Conference here, including Ban Ki-Moon, Margaret Chan, Peter Piot and presidents from Africa and Latin America, have all called upon governments to immediately target and control the epidemic among MSMs.   
  
Scientific evidence presented at the conference said MSMs were 19 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population. A report launched by the American Foundation for AIDS Research studied 128 country reports and found that nearly half (44%) failed to provide any data on MSMs.   
  
The report painted a clear picture of collective denial and inaction fuelling a worldwide public health crisis.   
Smarajit Jana, Naco’s national programme officer for targeted interventions, told TOI, "MSMs are a very high risk community in India. At present, India has 800 targeted interventions of which 200 are for MSMs. Under NACP III, out of India’s 2,100 TIs planned, 600 will be for MSMs. We are mapping India’s MSM population in 17 states, which we will know by August-end."   
  
Jana added, "Because these communities are suspicious of outsiders, we have decided to let MSM communities run the TIs on their own. Till now, TIs — covering behavioural change education, services to treat sexually transmitted infections, providing condom and lubricants, linking them with integrated counselling and testing centres and providing them with ART if infected — have managed to reach 70% MSMs in southern states. Our main worry is the states in northern India where TI coverage is just 20%."   
  
Naco has identified nine NGOs who will each run TIs for MSMs in two states. India believes that 5% of all sexually active males in India have sex with other men, with Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa reporting the highest number of cases. Studies have earlier found HIV infection rates as high as 16% among MSMs in India with prevention programmes available to only 2% of MSMs. "We need to engage MSMs. we need to take care of them and we should not forget them," WHO director-general Margaret Chan said. "In every major city in Asia, there are now epidemics of HIV among MSMs," Peter Piot, outgoing DG of UNAIDS, warned.

[Back to top](#_top)

**NPR: Many Nations Lack HIV Prevention For Gay Men**

by [Brenda Wilson](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=2101379)

Listen by clicking [here](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93408983)

[Back to top](#_top)

**The Canberra Times (Australia): Throwing money at HIV has left many men at grave risk**

August 6, 2008

AS GOVERNMENTS around the world directed billions of dollars at programs that aimed to prevent HIV among general populations, a giant wave of infections moved like a tsunami through communities of gay men in Asia, Africa and Latin America, new figures show.

Men who have sex with men are now nearly 20 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population, yet they often receive as little as 1 per cent of global funding.

"The story is one of abject failure on the part of the institutions that have been charged with leading the response to HIV/AIDS at local, national and international levels," said the chief executive of the American Foundation for AIDS Research, Kevin Frost.

"Men who have sex with men continue to have little or no access to HIV services of any kind and as a result are plagued by high rates of infection."

Further data on the growing gay epidemic is due to be presented today at the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City.

Until recently, HIV was seen as a threat to everyone. Now experts, including the head of the World Health Organisation's HIV/AIDS programs, Kevin de Cock, acknowledge that outside sub-Saharan Africa, where infections are largely driven by heterosexual transmission, HIV is mostly confined to male-to-male transmission, injecting drug users and sex workers and their clients.

Yet governments have focused on generalised epidemics, while ignoring the groups most at risk.

"These epidemics are happening in countries where men who have sex with men are hidden, highly stigmatised populations … It is not just family and community stigma, it is also legal stigma," said the director of the Johns Hopkins University centre for public health and human rights, Chris Beyrer.

"More than 80 countries still have laws criminalising these behaviours … At least nine still have the death penalty for same-sex behaviour."

Thailand's epidemic is one of the most worrying, he warned. HIV prevalence in Thailand among men under 22 years of age who have sex with men rose from 12 per cent in 2003 to 22 per cent in 2006. The rate of HIV in Thailand's general population is less than 2 per cent.

In Africa, men who have sex with men are also 10 times more likely to have HIV than the general population, Professor Beyrer said, while the epidemic in South America is now mostly among gay men.

"There is an urgent need to respond to this, yet there is endless denial out there that these epidemics exist, and as a result they are seriously underfunded," Professor Beyrer said.

These men, in desperate need of health care and prevention services such as access to condoms and safe sex information, are either excluded from health services or exclude themselves for fear of discrimination.

Wipas Wimonsate, a medical researcher from Thailand's Ministry of Public Health, said a recent study of male-to-male transmission in the Bangkok area found rates of HIV had climbed from 17.3 per cent in 2003 to 30.7 per cent in 2007.

Alarmingly, "none of the men who tested positive to HIV during the study knew they were positive", he said.

Peter Piot, the outgoing executive director of the Joint United Nations Program on AIDS, said the epidemic in male-to-male transmission in Asia "is reminiscent of what was happening in Western countries such as the US and Australia in the 1980s".

"In just about every major Asian city for which we have data, there's been a significant increase of HIV among men who have sex with men," he said.

In Beijing, a 2005 survey of men who have sex with men showed 1 per cent were living with HIV. Two years later, that figure had gone up to 6 per cent.

In Karachi, infections among male sex workers doubled to 8 per cent in the same time frame.

While more people in low- and middle-income countries were on HIV treatment than ever before, Dr Piot said the epidemic continued to outstrip the response.

"For the 1 million people newly on treatment, there were 2.7 million newly infected - that's nearly 7500 people infected with HIV every day."

David Wilson, from the World Bank's global HIV/AIDS program, said: "We need to keep focused on injecting drug users and sex workers, but we also need to increase resources to men who have sex with men.

"In most concentrated epidemics we shouldn't be spending too much money on the general population, who are at low risk.

"Globally, we have been a bit slow to realise that."

But there is at least one sign that the times may be changing. The UN General Assembly special session on AIDS held its first ever session dedicated to the topic in June.

[Back to top](#_top)

**Montreal Gazette: Some governments are making the AIDS crisis worse**

They both harass and ignore the most vulnerable populations

|  |
| --- |
|  |
| *JANET BAGNALL* |
| The Gazette |

Wednesday, August 06, 2008

AIDS in Canada today would be unrecognizable to the thousands of Canadians who contracted the illness between 1981, when it was discovered, and 1996, when antiretroviral drugs first came into use.

In 1981, a diagnosis of AIDS was a death sentence. But before he died (and he was usually a man) a patient often suffered rejection by friends, society at large, even family. Many of AIDS's first victims died alone, young men whose shrunken frames and hacking coughs made them too frightening to be with.

But today, a Canadian newly infected with HIV-AIDS can, with the help of antiretroviral therapy, expect to live another 13 years. Because of that, we are in danger of turning AIDS into just one illness among others. But AIDS remains in a class by itself, the "leading infectious disease challenge in global health," according to the World Health Organization.

As 22,000 scientists, medical workers, activists and journalists from 175 countries gathered in Mexico City for this week's 17th International AIDS Conference, the head of the International AIDS Society, Dr. Pedro Cahn, warned that the world is "not on course to meet universal access targets."

About 33 million people are infected with AIDS worldwide, but still far too few of them have access to antiretroviral therapy. The number of infections is swelling at a rate of 2.5 million a year. Globally, more than 25 million people are reported to have died of AIDS since 1981, mainly in the developing world.

Even in Canada, where antiretroviral therapy is freely available, AIDS continues its destructive path. About 58,000 people in Canada live with AIDS; by 2005 more than 13,000 Canadians had died of AIDS.

How many Canadians know this, especially within the groups at highest risk of infection, homosexual men particularly? Few, it's safe to say, with awareness campaigns gone the way of padded shoulders and big hair.

This is equally true in the U.S., where the Bush administration's emphasis on abstinence has pushed aside other prevention programs. But the need to stem HIV infection was brought home this week when the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, using a new, more accurate measure, found the U.S. infection rate was 40 per cent higher than previously estimated, bringing to 1.25 million the number of Americans with HIV.

These numbers pale next to the devastation AIDS continues to wreak in the developing world, where 90 per cent of the victims of HIV-AIDS live.

Without a vaccine, prevention and treatment are the only two cards available to play at this point. In China, the United Nations has warned, there could be 10 million people with HIV within two years unless the country acts urgently to start campaigns both to educate the public and fight the epidemic. As in the West 20 years ago, AIDS is viewed by many in China as a shameful secret.

But China is hardly alone. Governments around the world are making this health crisis worse through their refusal to identify needs and fund them appropriately, according to amfAR, a leading AIDS support body. This week in Mexico, the group reported on the explosion of infection among men who have sex with men, known as MSM. The report asks, rhetorically, "MSM, HIV, and the Road to Universal Access - How Far Have We Come?"

Not far at all. AmfAR reported that globally, men who have sex with men are 19 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population. In Latin America, that likelihood reaches 33 times. Even in sub-Saharan Africa, where HIV epidemics have spread through the general population, homosexuals are nearly four times more likely than the general population to be infected with HIV, amfAR said.

Homosexual men account for more than 25 per cent of HIV-infections in Latin America, but programs directed to them receive less than one per cent of HIV-AIDS funding in the region, amfAR reported. Elsewhere in the world, amfAR found that the criminalization of male-with-male sexual activity is the "major driver" of the epidemic among homosexual men. Around the world, 86 countries - from Egypt to Jamaica - criminalize homosexual activity.

Hounding vulnerable populations on the one hand, ignoring them on the other - both in the developing world and the wealthy West, we're still a long way from acknowledging how seriously we need to take this deadly epidemic.

[jbagnall@thegazette.canwest.com](mailto:jbagnall@thegazette.canwest.com)

[Back to top](#_top)

**Kaiser Daily Report: Newspapers Examine Challenges in HIV Prevention Among MSM**

[Aug 07, 2008]

      Rising HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men, "[h]omophobia, biology and misplaced confidence that AIDS has become a treatable chronic illness are contributing to a disturbing flashback among scientists and activists" and concern among public health officials that many countries "appear to be repeating the early patterns of the epidemic," the [Washington Post](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/06/AR2008080602940.html) reports.   
  
HIV/AIDS was labeled a "homosexual disease" when it first appeared in the 1980s, but then "an enormous grassroots movement ... sparked government action, and more significantly, effective prevention campaigns" among MSM, the Post reports. However, HIV infections among MSM have been increasing, particularly among communities where there is a stigma against homosexuality, according to the Post.  
  
Michael Sidibe, assistant secretary general of the United Nations, said, "We have come full circle. In the beginning, gay men in places like San Francisco and New York proved we could do prevention. When we moved from that and started talking about the broad scope of the epidemic, suddenly men who have sex with men became marginalized."   
  
"'Prevention fatigue,' confidence in new antiretroviral drugs, the use of methamphetamines and the arrival of a generation of young men who did not experience the ravages of the 1980s" is contributing to the situation, according to Richard Wolitski, acting director of [CDC](http://www.cdc.gov/)'s HIV/AIDS prevention division. Wolitski added that HIV is "transmitted more easily via anal sex than vaginal sex."  
  
Many MSM in the U.S. engage in "serosorting," where they try to calculate risk based on their own and their partner's HIV status, the *Post* reports. However, many men do not know they have HIV and can unknowingly spread the disease, Wolitski said.   
  
"The same kinds of stigma and discrimination and institutionalized homophobia that failed gay men in America is now failing MSM in the rest of the world," Kevin Frost, CEO of the [American Foundation for AIDS Research](http://www.amfar.org/cgi-bin/iowa/index.html), said. Frost added that increased HIV incidence among MSM, in many cases, is "directly related to the institutionalization of homophobia" (Connolly, Washington Post, 8/7).   
  
An AmfAR report released Monday at the [XVII International AIDS Conference](http://www.aids2008.org/) in Mexico City found MSM are at an increased risk of HIV. According to the report, despite a unanimous commitment that all U.N. member countries made in 2001 to monitor HIV among high-risk groups, 71% of countries said they did not have any information on the percentage of MSM contacted by HIV prevention groups. Of 128 countries, 44% failed to provide HIV data on MSM.   
  
According to the report, Benin, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya and Thailand are the countries with the highest reported HIV prevalence among MSM. Although data were scarce, the study found MSM were 33 times more likely to be living with HIV than the general population in Latin America, 18 times more likely in Asia and at least four times more likely in Africa ([Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=53762), 8/6).  
  
Sexual activity between men is criminalized in 85 countries and is punishable by death in seven countries and by imprisonment in 76 countries, according to the [International Lesbian and Gay Association](http://www.ilga.org/).  
  
Craig McClure, executive director of the [International AIDS Society](http://www.iasociety.org/), said, "It's difficult to provide services to men who have sex with men in countries where they don't acknowledge they exist" (Washington Post, 8/7).  
  
Post reporter Ceci Connolly on Thursday will discuss her [series](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?hint=1&DR_ID=53639) on HIV/AIDS along the U.S.-Mexico border and her coverage of the XVII International AIDS Conference ([Washington Post](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2008/08/06/DI2008080602499.html) Live Discussion, 8/7). A resource page on HIV/AIDS and the XVII International AIDS Conference also is available [online](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/noborder/index.html?hpid=arts) from the Post.

Additional Newspaper Coverage on MSM

* [Globe and Mail](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080806.waids07/BNStory/National): The HIV community has "failed to bring down the incidence of HIV/AIDS in MSM because we have not tried," Jorge Saavedra, director of Mexico's national HIV/AIDS program [CENSIDA](http://www.censida.gob.mx/), said at the AIDS conference. McClure added that providing human rights protections for MSM and addressing the stigma of same-sex relationships are necessary to slow the spread of HIV. [UNAIDS](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/UNAIDS) Executive Director Peter Piot at the AIDS conference called on countries to revise policies that criminalize same-sex activity, saying that the laws discourage MSM from seeking HIV testing and treatment. "Homophobia kills. We must kill homophobia," Piot said (Picard, Globe and Mail, 8/7).
* [New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/07/world/americas/07mexico.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=vulnerable%20to%20hiv&st=cse&oref=slogin): The Times on Thursday examined men who have sex with men in Mexico and Latin America. According to the Times, "Because machismo is pronounced in Mexico and homosexuality is far from accepted, social conditions in the country and in other parts of Latin America force much sexual behavior into the shadows. That increases the challenges that AIDS experts say they face in combating the risky sexual practices that fuel the disease." The Times reports that MSM in Mexico who "live lives in denial" frequently engage in high-risk sex but do not acknowledge it to anyone. MSM also are often hard to reach in HIV prevention and education campaigns because they tend to ignore prevention messages if they believe they are targeted toward gay men (Lacey, New York Times, 8/7). A video on the [Times](http://video.on.nytimes.com/?fr_story=2f2777d6e2155646ace6ec414aeaadd1db150082) Web site on Wednesday highlighted how sexual ambiguity, including denial and discrimination, in Mexico forces some people to be secretive about their behaviors, which hinders efforts to fight HIV/AIDS (New York Times video, 8/6).

Multimedia Coverage  
NPR's "All Things Considered" on Wednesday included a discussion about the AmfAR report. The segment includes comments from an HIV-positive MSM living in North Carolina (Wilson, "All Things Considered," NPR, 8/6). Audio of the segment is available [online](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93351129).  
  
Kaisernetwork.org is the official [webcaster](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/aids2008/) of the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City. Click [here](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/health_cast/signupAIDS2008.cfm) to sign up for your Daily Update e-mail during the conference. A webcast on MSM is available [online](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/health_cast/hcast_index.cfm?display=detail&hc=2916).



[Back to top](#_top)

**eFluxMedia: Prevalence of HIV Infection among MSM Key Topic at the AIDS Conference**

August 7, 2008

By Alice Carver

One of the things that worried public health leaders gathered at the international conference on AIDS in Mexico City is the fact that more cases of HIV infection still occur among “men who have sex with men.” HIV and AIDS are concentrated in Mexico particularly among men who have sex with men. While in the United States, 53 percent of new HIV infections in 2006 were in gay and bisexual men, in Mexico men who have sex with men are 109 times as likely as others to develop HIV, the washingtonpost.com noted.

The biggest percentage (46%) of HIV/AIDS infections in 2007 in US has been reported among men with homosexual orientation. Black Americans are seven times more likely to be infected than whites. Afro-Americans are the most exposed male human beings to HIV infection (annual rate of change 14.9 percent), followed by Caucasians (9.4 percent annual increase) and Hispanics (7.9 percent).

These results bright to light another problem: when the virus fist appeared in the ’80s, the disease was labelled as a homosexual illness. Fighting homophobia was one of the key topics at the International Conference, beside HIV prevention. Thousands of people marched to the streets holding banners with slogans that encouraged people to fight against gay people discrimination. It was their way to show their support to gay people, who represent one fourth of the percentage of HIV/AIDS infections.

Participants concluded that more effort needs to be done in order to reduce the percentage of HIV/AIDS infections. Representatives of the American Foundation for AIDS research emphasized the need to develop programs that target those racial-sexual categories that are at risk.

About 56,000 people became infected with HIV in the past year, according to the revised estimate of HIV’s toll in the United States. CDS’s estimates reveal that the HIV epidemic is worse than previously known. The number of new infections is 40 percent higher than earlier projections.

[Back to top](#_top)

**Financial Times: When the drugs don't work**

By Andrew Jack

Published: August 1 2008

When Nathan Clu-meck last year examined 100 people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who had begun HIV treatment in the previous 12 months, he was shocked by what he found. Thirty of them had virus strains that resisted the standard medicines given to new patients.

The current approach to treatment in the developing world is contributing to growing drug resistance, warns Prof Clumeck, head of infectious diseases at Belgium's St-Pierre University Hospital. "We are creating a virological time bomb."

The development is emerging at a time when sharply escalating funding from the international community is increasing treatment in poorer countries - and, paradoxically, this wave of treatment is part of the problem. Initiatives include most recently President George W. Bush's approval this week for a $48bn (£24bn, €31bn) five-year programme of which the bulk is to be spent on combating Aids.

Drug resistance is of concern because the spiralling economic burden of HIV, the escalating costs and difficulties of using alternatives and the increasing likelihood of a resistant virus spreading across Africa and beyond come just as the research for new drugs and prevention techniques risks losing momentum. With 3m patients in low- and middle-income countries receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) for HIV, the rising absolute numbers carrying resistant strains of the virus have important implications for governments in poor countries - as well as for richer ones that receive immigrants and sponsor treatment in their countries of origin.

The issue is triggering growing international attention. David Heymann, an assistant director- general of the World Health Organisation, told a UK House of Lords committee recently: "We have drugs going out in massive quantities . . . and there are not systems in countries that are [in place and are] monitoring resistance to these drugs."

The question will be discussed in detail at the 17th international Aids conference that begins this weekend in Mexico City - alongside a series of recent setbacks to researchers trying to develop vaccines and microbicide gels to reduce the risk of HIV infection and new drugs to treat it. Roche of Switzerland last month said it was withdrawing from HIV research, while Merck of the US recently cancelled one such treatment project; poor results have also left it with no HIV vaccine under test.

Resistance to HIV - as with tuberculosis, malaria and multiple microbial infections - is nothing new. In the US, some studies have shown that up to a quarter of "treatment-naive" patients not yet receiving drugs carry resistant forms of the virus. Nor does it necessarily spell disaster. There are more than 25 different combinations of medicines developed over the past decade, offering doctors in the west a range of alternative "second-line" and subsequent "salvage" drug cocktails to reduce side-effects and fight HIV in spite of resistance.

But there are important differences with the new epidemic of HIV drug resistance in the developing world. In richer countries, the phenomenon has emerged over two decades, fostered by the prolonged use of a single "mono-therapy" drug when there was no alternative. In poorer countries, however, it has appeared far more rapidly.

Since Médecins Sans Frontières began offering HIV services at its South African clinic in the poor Cape Town district of Khayelitsha five years ago, for example, the international medical charity estimates that 22 per cent of its patients no longer respond to first-line antiretroviral therapy.

Patients in the developing world who in the past were left to die are now able to take advantage of more recent medical advances by receiving combinations of different drugs that are more effective and reduce this risk of resistance. But their options remain much more limited than for those living in the west. Where patients in richer countries receive treatment tailored to their needs, with detailed medical examinations and expensive testing, in poorer nations the trade-off for providing accelerated access since the start of the decade has been a "public health approach". This involves simplified methods using a standardised and far narrower range of drugs, without the need for the costly laboratory analysis and intensive medical scrutiny associated with individually tailored care.

The result is that most newly diagnosed HIV patients in poorer countries receive types of first-line therapy that are not now prescribed in the west, including efavirenz and nevirapine. These are from a class of drugs called non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNTRIs) which, while allowing cheap and effective treatment for many patients in the short term, may also trigger greater long-term resistance.

Not everyone sees resistance as a problem. A recent series of studies produced under the auspices of the World Health Organisation concluded that fewer than 5 per cent of patients in Asia, Latin America and Africa carried virus resistant to these medicines, justifying their continued use as first-line therapy. But Prof Clumeck is sceptical. "It's a very useful discourse to show that donors are not wasting their money," he says. The studies may be unrepresentative, he adds - and resistance typically takes several years to develop whereas, in most countries examined, treatment began only in the last two to three years.

The snag is that so little data on resistance currently exist for first-line therapies, let alone for alternative fallback treatments. Large donors including the United Nations-backed Global Fund to Fight Aids, TB and Malaria have accelerated treatment but not imposed accompanying monitoring. "I think this is likely to be the single most important problem in the field," says Kevin Frost, chief executive of the Foundation for Aids Research, which has received funding from the Dutch government to establish networks to monitor HIV resistance in Asia. "It's far more complicated and slow to develop surveillance infrastructure for monitoring resistance than for treatment."

Selina Lo, medical co-ordinator in Geneva for MSF, which has been in the forefront of HIV treatment in developing countries, says: "We don't really have the capacity to do resistance studies. Monitoring capacity is really poor. It requires so much investment."

In the absence of more reliable data, one proxy indicator of resistance is poor "adherence" - the extent to which patients take their medicine consistently and at the recommended doses. Some studies have suggested that poorer countries have been able to achieve rates of above 90 per cent, similar or even above those in the west. But a systematic review published last year in PLoS Medicine, an academic journal, suggested that across 70,000 patients in 13 sub-Saharan African countries treated during 2000-07, on average only just over 60 per cent were still taking medicine two years after they were first enrolled in a clinic.

"A worrying number of patients in sub-Saharan Africa who need ART are lost from treatment programmes," concluded the researchers from Boston and Johannesburg, who argued that true retention rates might be lower still because clinicians with more disappointing results are less likely to publish them.

Of the 40 per cent who stopped seeking treatment, some did so because they were diagnosed too late and died. But many others were "lost to follow-up", a catch-all term that includes many patients who are still alive and - having started and then stopped taking medicines - allowing the virus to survive in more resistant form. The first-line therapies used as standard in developing countries have unpleasant side-effects that increase the likelihood patients will stop taking them regularly. HIV develops resistance to the NNRTIs more easily than to more recently launched classes of drug - and resistance is to the entire class of NNRTIs, closing off alternative treatment options.

More generally, much HIV treatment to date in poor countries - including sub-Saharan Africa, which has two-thirds of the world's cases - has been "gold-plated": it is provided by organisations such as MSF with expatriate doctors, funding and support far beyond the quality available in most government clinics. The more that antiretroviral therapy programmes are extended in remote rural areas for the estimated two-thirds of HIV-infected people who require treatment but are not receiving it, the greater the risks become of poor adherence. Supplies of drugs may be irregular and patients who eke out an existence on the land may struggle to keep appointments with healthcare workers, while a lack of adequate food or social support can discourage them from taking their medicines as prescribed.

Other factors are also contributing to greater drug resistance in developing countries than traditionally seen in the west. Weak public health systems mean patients have sought private medical advice, and sometimes taken medicines that are not recommended, or have been unable to pay for and take the prescribed drugs consistently.

Another great short-term success in Africa in recent years also brings long-term risks: a preventative dose of nevirapine to expectant mothers with HIV and their newborns sharply reduces the risk that the child contracts the virus from an infected mother. But it also triggers resistance, preventing the drug's future use to treat them. Equally, the lack of HIV drugs tested for use in children - a problem that scarcely exists in the west but that affects 2m children, largely in Africa - means pills designed for adults are crudely cut or split, in a way that may not provide the appropriate dosage.

Also in danger of stimulating drug resistance in developing countries are poor-quality therapies. The US Department of Justice recently claimed in court filings - vigorously rejected by the company - that Ranbaxy of India, a large exporter of generic HIV medicines, had "adulterated" drugs sold via the US into the developing world.

A study this spring by Abbott Laboratories of the US suggested that Indian generic companies' copies of Kaletra, Abbott's antiretroviral drug, were not absorbed in the same way in the body, raising questions about how effective they would prove.

Elsewhere, unpublished data in Thailand point to significant levels of resistance in patients using NNRTIs produced by the state pharmaceutical company, which has failed to pass quality control tests from any external regulatory agency. The resistance may in part be because Thailand has been treating more patients for longer. But it also points to one necessary policy response to fight resistance: tougher international scrutiny of plants that produce HIV medicines and an assurance for countries buying them that quality is consistent.

A second need is for innovative medical programmes to boost drug adherence in poor countries. A third possible approach is a shift in the treatments used. Prof Clumeck calls for a switch directly to make current second-line therapies into the first-line option. But with many of these drugs still on patent, that implies substantial extra costs unless developers slash prices.

In any case, a final immediate issue is a need for greater efforts to strengthen the monitoring of resistance - something called for in the UK's House of Lords report late last month.

One message unites the prophets of rising drug resistance: they all argue that the trend should not justify slowing down the current expansion of HIV treatment to the developing world. As Kevin de Cock, director of the HIV department of the World Health Organisation, says: "If the message is not already on a bumper sticker, it ought to be: 'It's better to be alive with drug-resistant virus than dead with drug-sensitive virus'."

Still, as Mr Frost argues: "Resistance is an entirely predictable end-point. If it starts to spin out of control, it's going to be difficult to get a handle on."

A port seeks a place for frank talk

Veracruz, a steamy port on the southern Gulf of Mexico that is the largest city in the Mexican state of the same name, bears the official designation "Heroic" for its long history of resistance to invaders. These days it is on the front line of a different battle: the country's fight against HIV/Aids.

"We have the highest mortality rate from Aids of any state in the country," says Aurora Díaz, head of Coversida, a citizens' group that promotes education on the issue. From her office in the Veracruz university medical faculty where she co-ordinates research, Dr Díaz recalls the despair, bordering on panic, she and her public hospital colleagues felt when the first cases of Aids were identified in Veracruz just over 20 years ago.

In the pre-internet age and with the media kept on a tight rein by the one-party system that then ruled Mexico, "we didn't know where to look for information, much less know how to provide any for the population at large", Dr Díaz says. "Of the first five patients that were diagnosed, four were at an advanced stage and died within a year. There was no medicine, precious little information - but I realised that something had to be done."

That "something" was to found Coversida. Since then, knowledge has spread, but so too has Aids. Veracruz, the nation's leading port, has doubled in size since Mexico's economy opened to the world. Migrants from all over the country and beyond flocked in - as did the sex industry. Free trade and paid-for sex have proved a potent cocktail.

Coversida is one of several groups that sprang up at the same time across the country. Like the citizens' groups that emerged from the devastating 1985 Mexico City earthquake, they opened the first chinks in the armour of one-party rule. While the government sat on its hands, ordinary people for the first time tackled big social issues by themselves.

The government, now democratically elected, has since taken action of its own. Antiretroviral drugs are available free to those without medical insurance and are administered at a growing number of state clinics - one of them just a block away from Dr Díaz's office. But the citizens' groups still have a big role to play, says José Luis López of the San José de Guadalupe Foundation in Nezahualcoyotl, a working-class suburb of Mexico City. So does David Alberto Murillo, president of the Mexico City-based Amigos contra el Sida ("Friends against Aids").

While noting that the health ministry's budget for the fight against Aids rose by almost 40 per cent this year to $150m (£76m, €96m), Mr Murillo says nothing is being done to help patients who suffer severe side-effects from antiretroviral medication. Nor are efforts being made to adopt new alternatives. "But the biggest gap is in education," he adds.

For years Mexico was like Victorian Britain, with a priggish veneer on an underworld bacchanal. Homophobia remains rife and the sexual abuse of children is often covered up. "When you can't talk frankly about routine sexual matters, it's difficult to get the message about Aids across to people," says Mr Murillo. "Sex education in schools is severely restricted by teachers' reticence."

Mr Murillo favours sex education in primary schools. "About 50 per cent of the children in primaries abandon the school system after that," he says. "Once that happens, they're effectively abandoned."

In Nezahualcoyotl, Dr López adds: "People have got to learn to speak frankly about sex and shake off their prejudices."

[Back to top](#_top)

# Seattle Times: Study: HIV rate 40% higher than thought

The United States has significantly underreported the number of new HIV infections occurring nationally each year, with a study released...

By [LAWRENCE K. ALTMAN](http://search.nwsource.com/search?sort=date&from=ST&byline=LAWRENCE%20K%2E%20ALTMAN)

The New York Times

A march in Mexico City against stigma, discrimination and homophobia precedes today's opening of the 17th International AIDS Conference there.

MEXICO CITY — The United States has significantly underreported the number of new HIV infections occurring nationally each year, with a study released Saturday showing that the annual infection rate is 40 percent higher than previously estimated.

The study, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), found that 56,300 people became newly infected with HIV in 2006, compared with the 40,000 figure the agency has cited as the recent annual incidence of the disease.

The findings confirm that HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, has its greatest effect among gay and bisexual men of all races (53 percent of all new infections) and among African-American men and women.

The new figures are likely to strongly influence a number of decisions about efforts to control the epidemic, said CDC director Julie Gerberding and other AIDS experts.

"CDC's new incidence estimates reveal that the HIV epidemic is and has been worse than previously known," said Kevin Fenton, who directs HIV-prevention efforts at the agency.

A separate trend analysis published as part of the study suggests that the number of new infections was probably never as low as the earlier estimate of 40,000 and that it has been roughly stable since the late 1990s.

CDC officials said the revised figure reflected the ability of a new testing method to more precisely measure HIV incidence and secure a better understanding of the epidemic.

The agency did not release new numbers for prevalence, relying on existing estimates that 1 million to 1.1 million Americans are HIV-positive. But epidemiologist and AIDS expert Philip Alcabes, of Hunter College of the City University of New York, said the increased incidence indicates "there are roughly 225,000 more people living with HIV in the U.S. than previously suspected."

More than 15,000 Americans die of AIDS each year.

The CDC, the federal agency responsible for tracking the AIDS epidemic in the United States, said its new monitoring system provided more precise estimates than were previously possible of new infections in specific populations. Infection rates among blacks were found to be seven times as high as for whites (83.7 per 100,000 people versus 11.5 per 100,000) and almost three times as high as for Hispanics (29.3 per 100,000 people), a group that was also disproportionately affected.

A quarter of infected people do not know they are infected because they have not been tested for the virus.

The CDC has known of the new figures since last October, when the authors completed a manuscript and sent it to the first of three journals. But the agency refused to release the findings until they were published in a peer-reviewed medical journal. The first two journals rejected the authors' request for a fast-track review.

The paper is being published in Wednesday's issue of The Journal of the American Medical Association. The journal and the CDC plan to officially release it today at the opening of the 17th International AIDS Conference in Mexico City.

Kevin Robert Frost, chief executive of the American Foundation for AIDS Research, said the conference would exert increasing pressure on "governments to focus on reaching the marginalized populations that are most affected by the epidemic," such as gay men, injecting drug users and African Americans.

"The shameful reality is that most governments and global health institutions are only now beginning to develop strategies to reach these vulnerable groups," Frost said.

The revised figures are based on a new laboratory test that can distinguish between recent and long-standing HIV infection and on statistical measures and extrapolations.

Material from the Los Angeles Times

[Back to top](#_top)

**eFlux Media: HIV Infection Rate Higher Than Previously Estimated**

August 3, 2008

By Alice Carver

CDS’s advances in blood-testing methods of measuring newly diagnosed infections led to a revised estimate of the number of new infections. Using sophisticated testing methods, the Centers f or Disease Control and Prevention have been able to provide more accurate estimates, said Dr. Kevin Fenton, director of the CDC’s National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention, as quoted by the Los Angeles Times.

About 56,000 people became infected with HIV in the past year, according to the revised estimate of HIV’s toll in the United States.

“CDC’s first estimates from this system reveal that the HIV epidemic is – and has been -- worse than previously known. Results indicate that approximately 56,300 new HIV infections occurred in the United States in 2006,” the CDC said in a statement.

The number of new infections is thought to be 40 percent higher than earlier projections. Dr. Kevin Fenton added that the number of new infections has remained relatively constant since the late 1990 but this number remains “unacceptable high.” He said 15,000 to 18,000 Americans die every year of AIDS.

A recent report has reached the conclusion that the rate of HIV infection is progressively rising among “men who have sex with men” (MSM). The biggest percentage (46%) of HIV/AIDS infections has been reported among men with homosexual orientation. Black Americans are seven times more likely to be infected than whites. Afro-Americans are the most exposed male human beings to HIV infection (annual rate of change 14.9 percent), followed by Caucasians (9.4 percent annual increase) and Hispanics (7.9 percent).

“We need to develop programs that specifically target those most at risk, such as African Americans, Hispanics, and men who have sex with men,” Kevin Robert Frost, chief executive officer of the American Foundation for AIDS Research, said in a statement, according to Reuters.

The CDC spends about $750 million a year on AIDS prevention, which is, perhaps, as important as treatment. HIV/AIDS infections are discovered very late, sometimes as long as 10 years after exposure, in approximately every third AIDS patient. Often, infected people have engaged in unprotected sex with many different partners during this time.

[Back to top](#_top)

**The Med Guru: Sample This-AIDS Affects More Than 56,000 In US Every Year!**

August 3, 2008

By Jaspreet Kaur

AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome) affects 33 million people worldwide and is a cause of death for 2 million people every year. New statistics have come up which reveal that at least 56,000 people are infected by the AIDS virus every year in the US. The US [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.themedguru.com/articles/sample_this_aids_affects_more_than_56_000_in_us_every_year-8617061.html) said that these figures are 40% more than the previous calculations.

The CDC said in a statement, “CDC’s first estimates from this system reveal that the HIV [define](http://www.themedguru.com/symptoms/hiv) epidemic is- and has been-worse than previously known. Results indicate that approximately 56,300 new [HIV infections](http://www.themedguru.com/articles/sample_this_aids_affects_more_than_56_000_in_us_every_year-8617061.html) occurred in the United States in 2006.”

Though the actual rates of HIV infection have not increased, but better methods of diagnosing the disease and inferring these to the general population led to a higher estimate.

Dr. Kevin Fenton, head of the CDC’s AIDS branch, said that 15,000 to 18,000 Americans die of AIDS every year. He further added in a telephonic interview that the data collected reinforced the fact that there is a serious impact of the AIDS epidemic among gay and bisexual men in the United States. This also holds true for black men and women.

The CDC said the epidemic has been stable since the late 1990’s, despite the fact that the number of new HIV infections remains much higher. The data published in the Journal of the [American Medical Association](http://www.themedguru.com/articles/sample_this_aids_affects_more_than_56_000_in_us_every_year-8617061.html), confirm that black Americans are seven times more likely to be infected than whites.

Meanwhile, the AIDS activist groups showing a deep concern, said the latest figures are a testimony to the fact that US is doing too little to control the epidemic. Kevin Robert Frost, chief executive officer of the American Foundation for [AIDS Research](http://www.themedguru.com/articles/sample_this_aids_affects_more_than_56_000_in_us_every_year-8617061.html) said, “We need to develop programmes that specifically target those most at risk, such as African Americans, Hispanics and men who have sex with men.”

[Back to top](#_top)

**eFluxMedia: Daily Doses of Growth Hormone May Aid HIV Patients**

August 4, 2008

By Alice Carver

Low-dose injections with human growth hormone can reverse some of the abnormal fat distribution caused by HIV therapy, researchers said in a new study released in conjunction with the International AIDS Conference Meeting. But the treatment has negative consequences as well, such as the fact that it produces an unnecessary risk for those with early stages of diabetes.

The hormone treatment produces good results, reducing fat deposits around internal abdominal organs by about 10 percent, but it would have to be used very carefully to avoid inducing diabetes, said study co-author Dr. Steven Grinspoon of Massachusetts General Hospital.

“Even low-dose growth hormone, albeit effective in reducing cardiovascular risk factors and better tolerated than high-dose growth hormone, may increase specific glucose parameters,” Dr. Grinspoon said.

Growth hormone (GH) secretion is reduced in patients with HIV and abdominal fat accumulation. HIV patients who take cocktails of anti-AIDS drugs for their infections develop deposits of visceral fat in their stomach, neck and cheeks. The abnormal fat distribution caused by HIV therapy is associated with higher levels of cholesterol, triglycerides and blood sugar, which put them at risk of heart problems.

The researchers enrolled 55 patients with the AIDS virus who also had low levels of naturally occurring human growth hormone.

Half were given daily doses of about 0.33 milligrams of the hormone and the other received a placebo. The researchers found that abdominal fat decreased significantly in the first group compared with the placebo group, with a percentage change in those that were given the growth hormone of −8.5 percent and −1.6 percent in the placebo group. Lower dose guaranteed fewer side-effects and researchers suggested that hormone treatment has limited use for treating fat deposits around internal abdominal organs caused by HIV. But the experimental treatment is “not a panacea,” Dr. Grinspoon said.

The experimental treatment with human growth hormone could be useful for those with abdominal fat accumulations, but it should include a diabetes drug, to minimize side-effects.

The study appears in the Aug. 6 issue of the “Journal of the American Medical Association” and was among reports prepared for presentation Sunday at the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City.

About 56,000 people became infected with HIV in the past year, according to the revised estimate of HIV’s toll in the United States. CDS’s estimates reveal that the HIV epidemic is worse than previously known. The number of new infections is 40 percent higher than earlier projections. The rate of HIV infection is progressively rising among black Americans and among “men who have sex with men,” the report said.

A key topic at the International Day Conference, beside HIV prevention, was preventing homophobia. Thousands of people marched to the streets holding banners with slogans that encouraged people to fight against gay people discrimination. They showed their support to gay people, who represent one fourth of the percentage of HIV/AIDS infections.

Kevin Robert Frost, chief executive officer of the American Foundation for AIDS Research said emphasized the need to develop programs that target those racial-social-sexual categories that are at risk. African Americans, Hispanics, and men who have sex with men are the most exposed male human beings to HIV infection.

[Back to Top](#_top)