A new breed of Aids

SEATTLE (USA), Friday

Only a few US blood centres are testing for a rare but spreading strain of the AIDS virus despite fears that it could slip into the nation's blood supply.

More than 50,000 people in Europe, Africa, India, the former Soviet Union, and North and South America are infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus

type, 2, the second virus known to cause Aids, according to tile World Health Organisation.

HIV-2 has been identified in at least 37 countries. The mutation is widespread in Africa, where it primarily is

spread heterosexually and has had an incubation period of up to 19 years. At least 43 cases of HIV-2 have been identified in the United States and Canada. Though rare, many experts say there is reason to believe HIV-2

will spread.

"HIV-2 could be a bigger heterosexual transmission threat" than HIV-1, the first Aids virus discovered, said Michael Wandell, an epidemiologist and director of regulatory and clinical affairs for genetic systems. The

Redmond based company is the only federally licensed maker of HIV-2 tests.

While US blood centres are required to test donated blood for HIV-1, testing for the rarer HIV2 is not required. Experts disagree whether HIV-1 tests always will detect HIV-2. Many HIV -1 tests. now used are cross-reactive with HIV-2,

(AP)