

HIV in the UK

Overview

- There are more people living with HIV in the UK than ever before. By the end of 2008, numbers had reached an estimated 83,000. This is an 8% increase from 2007. Over a quarter (27%) of these people are undiagnosed and do not know they are living with HIV.
- Terrence Higgins Trust is calling for levels of undiagnosed HIV in the UK to be halved by 2014 through the introduction of a targeted national screening programme.
- Late diagnosis continues to be a big issue in the UK. Almost a third (32%) of people diagnosed with HIV in 2008 were diagnosed with a CD4 count below 200, meaning that their immune systems had already been damaged. Over half of those diagnosed in 2008 (55%) had CD4 levels of below 350 around the time of diagnosis, which is the threshold for starting treatment in the new British HIV Association guidelines.
- Late diagnosis is a major factor in HIV-related deaths. Of the 525 people reported to have died with HIV in 2008, almost three quarters (73%) had been diagnosed with CD4 levels below the 350 threshold for starting treatment.
- In 2008 there were 7,298 new HIV diagnoses in the UK. This is 3% fewer new diagnoses than in 2007.
- According to initial estimates from the HPA, lifetime costs of HIV treatment in the UK are likely to be between £280,000 and £360,000 for each person who is diagnosed. This means that preventing the UK-acquired infections that were diagnosed in 2008 could have saved up to £1.1 billion over their lifetimes.

Gay and bisexual men

- Numbers of new diagnoses amongst gay men fell by 6% in 2008. However, levels of HIV amongst gay men remain high and gay men are still the group most at risk of HIV in the UK.
- In 2008, 38% of new HIV diagnoses were amongst gay men. 83% of these men are thought to have acquired HIV in the UK.
- One in five gay men in 2008 were diagnosed late. Initial data for 2009 shows that around one in five gay men were likely to have been infected in the last six months, showing the need to increase HIV prevention work with this group.

Heterosexuals

- 58% of new diagnoses in 2008 were amongst heterosexuals and two thirds of heterosexual diagnoses were amongst Black Africans. The majority of heterosexual infections were probably acquired abroad.
- Over a third of heterosexual women (36%) and 44% of heterosexual men (44%) were diagnosed late in 2008. The majority of these late diagnoses were likely to have been amongst Black Africans.
- The number of heterosexual diagnoses amongst those probably infected in the UK has risen steadily in the last few years. In 2008, 27% of all new heterosexual diagnoses were probably acquired in the UK. In 2007, this proportion was 23%. The majority of these diagnoses are likely to be amongst the Black African community in the UK.

Living with HIV

- In 2008 61,213 people in the UK accessed care and treatment for HIV. This is an 8% increase from 2007.
- People with HIV are growing older. 17% of those accessing HIV care in 2008 were over 50. A further 14% were between 45 and 49 years old.
- Two in five (42%) of those with diagnosed HIV are gay men and of these, 87% are white. There are now over 25,500 gay men living with diagnosed HIV in the UK.
- Half of people accessing HIV care in 2008 were infected through heterosexual sex: 67% of these people were black African and 20% were white.
- 44% of people living with diagnosed HIV are in London. The biggest percentage increases in people accessing HIV care were outside London, with numbers up by 12% in the North West and 14% in the West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber since 2007.
- Three quarters (75%) of those receiving HIV care in 2008 were on antiretroviral therapy. Of these people, 77% were on triple therapy (3 anti-HIV drugs). A further 18% were taking 4 or more anti-HIV drugs.

Data source: Health Protection Agency, www.hpa.org.uk

The HIV and sexual health charity for life

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