

CDC: MORE THAN A MILLION AMERICANS NOW LIVING WITH HIV, REFLECTING SUCCESSFUL DRUG TREATMENT

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By DANIEL YEE, Associated Press Writer

Note from Pastor Kevin Lea (Revision 2) follows this article:

ATLANTA -- More than a million Americans are believed to be living with the virus that causes AIDS, the government said Monday in a report that reflects both a victory and a failure at combatting the disease.

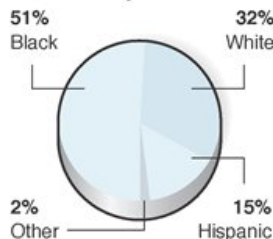
While better medicines are keeping more people with HIV alive, government health officials have failed to "break the back" of the AIDS epidemic by their stated goal of 2005. This is believed to be the first time the 1 million mark has been passed since the height of the epidemic

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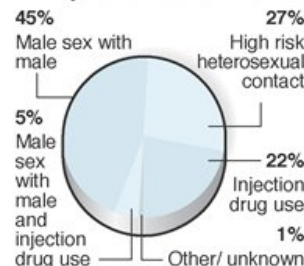
HIV tops 1 million cases in the U.S.

One million Americans were living with HIV at the end of 2003 and HIV prevalence remains extremely high among black men who have sex with men.

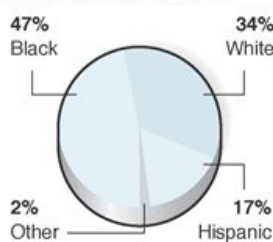
New HIV diagnosis by race/ethnicity



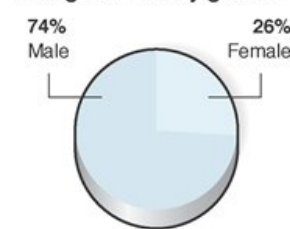
HIV by transmission method



Living with HIV by race



Living with HIV by gender



SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

AP

EMBARGOED UNTIL JUNE 13, 12:30 P.M.:
Graphic charts U.S. HIV cases by factor. (AP Graphic)

in the 1980s.

New medicines that weren't around in 1981 have allowed people infected with the virus to live longer, said Dr. Ronald Valdiserri, deputy director of the CDC's National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention.

"While treatment advances have been an obvious godsend to those living with the disease, it presents new challenges for prevention," he said as the National HIV Prevention Conference got under way. Among the challenges is reaching an estimated 25 percent of those with HIV who don't even know they have it.

That in part is why the CDC has been unable to fulfill the 2001 pledge made by the agency's Dr. Robert Janssen to "break the back" of the epidemic by cutting in half the estimated 40,000 new HIV infections that have occurred every year since the 1990s.

"It is clear that we have not achieved that goal. We have not halved the rates of new infections," Valdiserri said. "But we do think we are making progress."

However, some critics think the number of new annual infections could be even higher than 40,000.

"We're seeing more infections, that's the bad news. But the good news is many of us are living longer," said Terje Anderson, who was diagnosed with HIV eight years ago and AIDS four years ago. He now serves as executive director of the National Association of People Living with AIDS.

"It just points out how far we still have to go in really dealing effectively with this in this country. Maybe passing the million mark will drive home that this thing is getting bigger and it's not going away."

Health officials say the prevention failure in part has come from an abandonment of safe sex practices by gay and bisexual men _ who account for almost half of HIV cases. Experts think they may be weary of STD prevention messages. The majority of the others infected are high-risk heterosexuals and injection drug users.

Advocacy groups also say there's not enough federal money behind public awareness campaigns and other programs.

"In the earlier days of the AIDS epidemic, we didn't know how to get AIDS under control. I think now we do, but we're watching a textbook case of not implementing a good plan," said Julie Davids, spokeswoman for the Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project.

Valdiserri said the CDC still is committed to cutting the new infection rate. One difficulty is that despite increases in routine HIV testing _ including wide use of rapid test kits that provide results in minutes _ many people have not been tested.

More than a quarter of the people living with HIV have not been diagnosed, the CDC estimated, and some apparently don't want to know. Valdiserri noted that nearly a third of those who tested positive at CDC-sponsored sites around the country did not return to learn their results.

An upcoming scientific paper from CDC officials says the majority of new infections have been transmitted by those with HIV who don't know they are infected, Valdiserri said.

Recent outbreaks of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases in major cities offer a hint that new infections may be as high as 60,000 cases a year, said Dr. Carlos del Rio, an Emory University professor of medicine.

"The U.S. has had a clear failure in HIV prevention," del Rio said. The CDC hasn't been given adequate resources to tackle HIV prevention, he said, and experts have focused too much on whether it's better to promote abstinence or condom use to stop the spread of the virus.

"We're debating too much what to do and are not doing enough," said del Rio.

Estimating the number of Americans with HIV has always been difficult for health officials, but this year's figures are believed to be the most accurate ever thanks to wider case reporting.

In the 1990s, the CDC and other agencies generally agreed that between 600,000 and 900,000 people had the virus, according to the University of California-San Francisco's Center for HIV Information. The number in the mid-1980s was probably around 1.2 million, experts believe.

The new estimates indicate blacks account for 47 percent of HIV cases; gay and bisexual men make up 45 percent of those living with the virus that causes AIDS, the health agency believes.

In 2003, the rates of AIDS cases were 58 per 100,000 in the black population, 10 per 100,000 Hispanics, 6 per 100,000 whites, 8 per 100,000 American Indian/Alaska native population, and 4 per 100,000 Asian/Pacific Islanders.

The CDC also warned those demographics may soon change because heterosexual blacks, women and others infected after having high-risk sex

(such as with someone with HIV, an injection-drug user or a man who has sex with other men) now account for a larger proportion of those living with HIV than those who are living with full-blown AIDS.

Note from Pastor Kevin Lea:

It was in the early 80's that Americans were first being told about the threat of AIDS. There were very few HIV positive people in the world at the time, just like there were very few with SARS a couple years ago. Today SARS is a thing of the past, but AIDS is now killing millions. How can this be since the SARS virus is much more contagious?

The root cause of SARS was tied to China's practice of feeding the dung of animals to other animals. China told their farmers to stop this practice, thus getting to the root of the problem. In addition, those already infected with SARS were quarantined away from the healthy population. Together, these actions stopped the spread of a disease that could have also killed millions. Some would ask why this same concept was not used to deal with AIDS. The answer defies common sense, because it is associated with spiritual deception.

The root cause of AIDS is sexual immorality, which God condemns (for our own good). Since AIDS is not as contagious as SARS, stopping the root cause also stops the spread of the disease. If Americans had turned away from sexual sin (repented), and also kept contaminated blood out of the blood banks, then AIDS would also be a thing of the past in America today. But foolish Americans chose death and misery over obedience to God and His commandments. What a tragedy, and not only to us but also to the many nations our people have spread the disease to. How many millions need to die before we repent and turn to God?

In April of 2005, I was in the town of Nimule in South Sudan teaching Christian Chaplains of the South Sudanese Army at the Far Reaching Ministries Chaplain Bible School. It was my third trip to Sudan and the first under the newly signed peace agreement with the Northern Islamic government. The peace agreement has caused a massive influx of foreigners and financial aid to assist the South in social programs and infrastructure. Some of these aid moneys were used to build an AIDS testing and counseling center. I was there for the ribbon cutting ceremony that was attended by the local Army Commander and the County Commissioner.

The meeting opened in prayer and a reading from the Bible. The

local speakers then talked about how death will sweep their town if foreign influences of sexual immorality take hold in the people. Western foreign aid workers also gave their typical politically correct speeches about testing and counseling and told me privately that their counseling would be the same as in the West (that is - if it feels good do it, but use condoms). The Western worker agreed with me that this message was not stopping the spread in America (where some surveys show that one in four above 20 years old are suffering from some form of STDs), but shrugged his shoulders saying, "We are doing the best we can."

After the meeting I went back to the Chaplain Bible School and told the students about a danger to their country that is far greater than the threat from the Muslims of the North (who were only able to kill two million of their people in the 20+ years of their Jihad against the South). I told them that if their people listen to the "counseling" of the Western aid workers, then in a few years AIDS will be decimating their people. However, if they took the knowledge of God's law to their people, and if their people embraced the truth of God's Word, then they will prosper as a people and have all of Africa to themselves (since the rest of Africa is dying off from AIDS). These young men understood the seriousness of their mission and were eager to teach their people the truth.

After my encouragement to them I pondered what kind of reception I would have received had I given the same teaching to a group of American military Chaplains. I doubt it would have fallen on welcoming ears, but the truth remains, if Americans don't repent of their sexual immorality, then all the condom use preaching in the world is not going to save our people, our economy, our health care system, etc. and someone will soon be writing "The rise and fall of America."

I pray the reader will embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior, if they have not already. Jesus came to forgive sinners. Maybe you are suffering with AIDS or another disease as a result of your sin. Don't blame God for this condition, He is not responsible, we are. It was man that invited sin and death into the world. God is responsible for loving you so much that He sent Jesus to take your place in punishment and suffering if you believe in Him. All who do believe will be forgiven and washed clean from their sin. If you come to Jesus humbly, and confess that you are a sinner worthy of death and suffering in the Lake of Fire, but appeal to God for His saving grace, then you will be saved. Yes you will still die of AIDS, or continue to suffer disease, but at death you will be resurrected into the presence of a holy and loving God. You will also receive a new body, free

from sin and disease.

I also pray the reader will consider the following verses from God's word as they decide what they will teach their children, their students, their friends, and how they will conduct their lives.

Deut 28:58 "If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD, 59 "then the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues-- great and prolonged plagues-- and serious and prolonged sicknesses. 60 "Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. 61 "Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, will the LORD bring upon you until you are destroyed. 62 "You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God. (NKJ)

Deut 30:14 "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. 15 "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, 16 "in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. 17 "But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, 18 "I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. 19 "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; 20 "that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." (NKJ)