

Partners eDemocracy Forum
Session III Topic: The HIV/AIDS Epidemic

Resources:

Suggested Introductory Readings:

The Department for Health and Human Services: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A Fact Sheet: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/resources/factsheets/index.htm> and A Fact Sheet about HIV/Aids and our youth: <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/sexualbehaviors/index.htm>

HIV/AIDS in 2005 (Following stats provided by the CDC)

- **More illness.** Even though blacks (including African Americans) account for about 13% of the US population, they account for about half (49%) of the people who get HIV and AIDS.
- **Shorter survival times.** Blacks with AIDS often don't live as long as people of other races and ethnic groups with AIDS. This is due to the barriers mentioned above.
- **For African Americans and other blacks, HIV/AIDS is a leading cause of death.**
- Of all black men living with HIV/AIDS, the primary transmission category was sexual contact with other men, followed by injection drug use and high-risk heterosexual contact [2].
- Of all black women living with HIV/AIDS, the primary transmission category was high-risk heterosexual contact, followed by injection drug use [2].
- Of the estimated 18,849 people under the age of 25 whose diagnosis of HIV/AIDS was made during 2001–2004 in the 33 states with HIV reporting, 11,554 (61%) were black [3].

Please visit the CDC website for a thorough breakdown of HIV/Aids infections by racial/demographic category.

- I. Introduction
 - a. Definition:
 - i. **HIV** stands for human immunodeficiency virus. This is the virus that causes AIDS. HIV is different from most other viruses because it attacks the immune system. The immune system gives our bodies the ability to fight infections. HIV finds and destroys a type of white blood cell (T cells or CD4 cells) that the immune system must have to fight disease.
 - ii. **AIDS** stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is the final stage of HIV infection. It can take years for a person infected with HIV, even without treatment, to reach this stage. Having AIDS means that the virus has weakened the immune system to the point at which the body has a difficult time fighting infections. When someone has one or more of these infections and a low number of T cells, he or she has AIDS.
- II. Risk and Preventive Factors
 - a. **Risk Factors:** injected drugs or steroids, during which equipment (such as needles, syringes, cotton, water) and blood were shared with others. Having unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex (that is, sex without using condoms) with men who have sex with men, multiple partners, or anonymous partners. Exchanging sex for drugs or money. Being given a diagnosis of, or been treated for, hepatitis, tuberculosis (TB), or a sexually transmitted disease (STD) such as syphilis. Receiving a blood transfusion or clotting factor during 1978–1985. Having unprotected sex with someone who has any of the risk factors listed above. Having sex with homosexuals or bisexuals, specifically gay men.

- b. **Preventive Factors:** Abstain from sex (do not have oral, anal, or vaginal sex) until you are in a relationship with only one person. Get tested before you have sex. Learn as much as possible about your partner's sexual history and prior drug use. Always use a latex condom every time you have sex. If you have sex with multiple partners get tested regularly. Do not inject illicit drugs. If you think you may have been exposed to another STD such as gonorrhea, syphilis, or *Chlamydia trachomatis* infection, get treatment. These diseases can increase your risk of getting HIV.
 - c. **Prevention Challenges:** Poverty, Denial, STDs, Drug Use, men how have sex with men (MSM) not disclosing their sexual orientation to heterosexual partners.
- III. Migration, Urbanization and its consequences
 - a. **US States News, February 13, 2007:** "Labor migration played a critical role in the spread of **HIV** in South Africa, according to new research published in the journal **AIDS...**" "Our model showed that migration primarily influences HIV spread by increasing high-risk sexual behavior," Lurie said. "Migrant men were four times as likely to have a casual sexual partner than non-migrant men. So, when coupled with an increase in unprotected sex, we found the frequent return of migrant workers to be an important risk factor for HIV." **Please see attached document for entire article.**
- IV. Global Values and Breakdown of Social Controls
 - a. **Africa News, March 6, 2007:** "Studies have shown that poor people suffer from higher levels of **illiteracy** and lack of access to health care and other social services. This makes it much less likely that they will receive information about HIV and how to avoid infection. Poor diets and housing make those infected by the virus more vulnerable to opportunistic infections." **Please see attached document for entire article.**
 - b. Failing State Haiti: By almost every measurable factor. Haiti is a nation in crisis. One in every 20 adults has **HIV or AIDS** and barely half the population can read and write. What's more, three-quarters of Haiti's population is unemployed, a figure more than twice that of war-torn Iraq.
Living in **poverty** 76%, Literacy rate 53%, Unemployment 70%, HIV/AIDS RATE 5%, Life expectancy 52 years (at birth), Population 8.3 million, Size 17,275 square miles
Ethnic groups Black 95%, Mixed or white 5%, Major religion Roman Catholic 80%.
Newsday (New York), January 1, 2006
 - c. African Countries Stress Negative Impact of Conflicts, Poverty, Unemployment, AIDS on Social Development, as Third Committee Concludes Debate on Social Issues
<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2003/gashc3739.doc.htm>
- V. Closing Discussion
 - a. Questions:
 - i. HIV/AIDS is a leading cause of death among blacks. How can this effectively and constructively be communicated to Black men and women?
 - ii. Why is the HIV/AIDS epidemic such a killer in the global black community?
 - iii. What can we do from the grass roots level?
 - iv. What organizations are available in our local and national communities? How do we join these groups to help fight AIDS?
 - v. What resources are available in our respective communities?