

Community Based HIV / AIDS Programmes.

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Abstract:

PIP: Much has been learned about the causes of HIV infection and AIDS and the factors which influence HIV transmission among humans. Despite this rapid accumulation of data, however, Africa continues to have an enormous AIDS epidemic. During the 1994 International AIDS Conference, sub-Saharan Africa was declared an endemic zone for HIV/AIDS. Almost 90% of the HIV-infected individuals in the region live in East and Central Africa. There is growing concern about the high prevalence of HIV infection among reproductive-aged women. Sentinel surveillance of pregnant women shows a rapid increase in HIV seroprevalence from the age of 15 years and a peak in HIV seroprevalence among women aged 20-24 years. Such prevalence has been influenced by changing value systems, socioeconomic marginalization, increased sexual liberalization, the collapse of traditional systems which taught young people how to manage their sexuality, and the biological vulnerability of young girls. HIV prevalence varies widely among urban areas. Studies, however, indicate that people in the region know what causes AIDS and that they are reasonably knowledgeable about the modes of HIV transmission. Some traditional practices are associated with a risk of HIV transmission, but it is fervently believed that failure to perform certain practices and rites angers the spirits and brings a curse upon the family and clan members. The strength of African societies lies in their general cohesiveness as well as their supportive nature during both difficult and prosperous times. This way of life, however, presents problems when addressing the prevention of HIV infection. New and innovative ways need to be developed to address AIDS prevention.