

Social epidemiology in Africa: slowing the heterosexual transmission of AIDS

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Abstract:

Analyzing why the rate of transmission of AIDS varies widely in Africa is the basis for designing strategies for intervention. Promiscuity, i.e. high rates of sex partner change, is not the only reason for rapid transmission, but it is a prerequisite for the explosive spread seen in certain groups. High frequency groups include mobile single men and prostitutes. Research and strategies must focus on sex practices, concepts of personal vulnerability, and possibility of behavioral change. The sexually transmitted diseases that are thought to increase susceptibility to HIV, i.e., genital ulcer diseases, can be controlled with appropriate strategies. Male circumcision is associated with lower HIV seroprevalence. Thus strategies must be concentrate on sustained prevention among high STD transmitters, providing early, effective care for STDs, increasing economic alternatives for women, and offering voluntary circumcision where culturally acceptable.