Overcoming obstacles to late presentation for HIV in Europe

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BACKGROUND

Progress has been made on access to HIV treatment across the WHO European Region, but significant challenges remain. HIV in Europe is a pan-European initiative, launched in 2007, that has succeeded in creating a platform between European advocates, clinicians, researchers and policy-makers around the prevailing challenge of getting people living with HIV earlier diagnosed and into treatment, care and support.

METHODS

- Building on past achievements of the HIV in Europe initiative, including the adoption of the European Parliament joint resolution on early diagnosis and early care, the initiative reinforces collaboration, advocacy and networking activities in the field throughout Europe on national and EU levels.
- The initiative is driven by acknowledging the importance of evidence to move the political agenda forward and seeks to implement innovative and evidence-based testing initiatives to get people tested and into care earlier in the course of their HIV infection.
- Pilot projects have been initiated on crucial barriers to testing and improvement of surveillance data, both of which are important to prevent HIV transmission, promote human rights of PLWHA and to deliver quality and timely HIV treatment and care.

RESULTS

1. When is a patient presenting late for care?

- Late presentation: Persons presenting with CD4 cell count <200 cells/µL at presentation with an AIDS-defining event, regardless of the CD4 cell count at presentation.
- Late presentation with advanced HIV disease: Persons presenting with an AIDS-defining event with a CD4 cell count <200 cells/µL at presentation with an AIDS-defining event, regardless of the CD4 cell count at presentation.

2. The number of undiagnosed PLWH

- The surveillance to identify the exact number of the number of undiagnosed PLWH requires data from all countries in Europe. Different estimation approaches exist, using different sources of data, and many countries do not appear to produce any estimates.
- The HIV in Europe initiative has initiated a Working Group on Estimation of HIV Prevalence in Europe who will present an initial working draft of available approaches and providing the necessary guidance for using them.
- The guidance document can help countries decide which data to collect in the long-term in order to estimate the number of undiagnosed people living with HIV.

3. Indicator Diseases Project

- In total, the Global Network for the People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+), the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW), the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the Pan-European Regional Office for AIDS (PARO) of WHO Regional Office for Europe, STI/HIV/AIDS Programme, have collaborated to develop a list of HIV indicator diseases.
- The list is designed to help countries identify gaps in their surveillance systems and to improve the coverage and quality of data.

4. Stigmatisation of access to testing and treatment

- In 2009 the Global Network for People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+), the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW), the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the Pan-European Regional Office for AIDS (PARO) of WHO Regional Office for Europe, STI/HIV/AIDS Programme, have collaborated to develop a list of HIV indicator diseases.
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CONCLUSION

- HIV in Europe recommends:
  - The initiation of audits to evaluate whether testing is being conducted in situations where there is an obvious indication;
  - Increased interaction and awareness raising among clinicians within different specialities and implementation of indicator disease guided testing;
  - Collection of key additional surveillance data for more reliable estimations of the size of the infected but not yet diagnosed population;
  - Development and implementation of evidence-based strategies to reduce the barriers to testing due to stigmatisation, discrimination and criminalisation.

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