HIV Is Rising in Latin America, Driven by Cases in Young Men

July 30, 2019 By Benjamin Ryan

Even as HIV rates decline among women and all other age groups of men, new cases of the virus have risen rapidly among young men in Latin America in recent years, the National AIDS Treatment Advocacy Project (NATAP) reports.

According to estimates from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the annual number of HIV infections, or incidence, has remained steady in Latin America for the past five years, at about 100,000 new cases. The authors of a new study sought a greater level of specificity with regard to recent infection trends in the region.

Investigators analyzed data from 42 public and private HIV centers in 11 Latin American nations and presented their findings in a poster at the 10th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Science (IAS 2019) last week in Mexico City. The centers all reported data on patients' sex, age and CD4 count at their first clinic visit between 2013 and 2017. The investigators excluded from their analysis individuals who were transferred to one of the centers with an existing HIV infection.

The centers cared for 19.5% of those in care for HIV in the 11 nations.

During the study period, the centers saw 48,179 new cases of HIV, including 7,271 cases in 2013; 8,197 in 2014; 9,670 in 2015; 11,096 in 2016; and 11,945 in 2017.

Based on the findings of HIV trends in these clinics, the study authors estimated that across the 11 nations, incidence of the virus declined among women during the study period. In 2013, women made up an estimated 21.7% of new HIV cases, a figure that fell to 16.9% in 2017.

HIV incidence was also estimated to have declined among men in all age brackets during the study period, with the exception of men 15 to 29 years old. This one demographic was the sole driver of the overall increase in new cases of the virus between 2013, when they made up an estimated 34.5% of new cases, and 2017, when they accounted for an estimated 46.7% of new cases.

The study authors urged a step-up in HIV prevention interventions among young men in Latin America.

To read the study abstract, click here.

To read the NATAP report, click here.

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