

# Hiv aids an overview



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HIV/AIDS: An Overview Virginia SkovAxia College of University of Phoenix July 12, 2009 There is an epidemic that is sweeping the world today and no one is immune to its devastating outcome. This epidemic knows no boundaries.

Age, gender, ethnic background, race or religion does not play a role in how this epidemic affects people. This epidemic is known as HIV slash AIDS.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) are two different diseases. When a person gets HIV there are four stages in which the disease progresses. According to essortment (2002), The period following infection is called the window. [This period] is called this because it reflects the window of time between infection and that which antibodies are develop in a person. The HIV test looks for antibodies not the virus.

The second stage is called seroconversion. This [occurs] when the body begins to develop [many] antibodies to fight off the virus in the body. During this period a person may have flu like symptom. Also during this period is said to be very infectious. The third stage is called symptom free. During this period a person may have no symptom what so ever. This can last any where from 6 months to well over [10] years. The medical world is not sure why some people are living symptom free for so long.

The final stage is called AIDS. This is the period when TCELL drop to below 200 and the OI” S are present.(para. 5)Although these two diseases are closely related to each other, a person has to have HIV before acquiring full blown AIDS. On the other hand a person with HIV may never get to the final

stage of the disease and never get AIDS. AIDS is just a stage of the disease known as HIV.

HIV is a versatile disease that can be transmitted in a few different ways. There are many myths about how HIV is transmitted. Scientists and researchers have proven through extensive testing that there are only six ways in which a person can contract this disease. The six ways are; unprotected sex, getting infected blood into the mucous system, using dirty needles or by way of a needle stick, blood transfusions, during birth and during breast feeding.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2007), ??? Some people fear that HIV might be transmitted in other ways; however, no scientific evidence to support any of these fears has been found??? (para. 2).

HIV is a slow acting virus and can take years after a person is infected before a person starts to show symptoms. This makes this disease dangerous because a person may not be aware that he or she is infected. Once a person is infected, there is a high chance that the disease will progress into the final stage of AIDS. When a person is first infected with the HIV virus, the body starts to fight the invading cells which can cause flu-like symptoms. The bodies CD4 cells, also known as T-helper cells, begin to be destroyed.

These cells are very important for the body??™s immune system to function properly. Without these cells, the body is unable to fight off infections and disease. According to AIDS. org (2007), ??? HIV disease becomes AIDS when your immune system is seriously damaged. If you have less than 200 CD4 cells or if your CD4 percentage is less than 14%, you have AIDS??? (para. 4).

When the body's CD4 cells become low enough for the person with HIV to become an AIDS patient, the body's immune system is unable to perform its job. An AIDS patient will be more susceptible to infections and in some cases the patient's own body will attack itself.

Although there is no cure for this horrible disease, a person with AIDS does have some treatment options. The main treatment that people infected with the HIV slash AIDS virus undergo is an antiretroviral drug treatment. While this treatment will not cure HIV or AIDS, it can help keep the patient from becoming ill. While on this type of treatment, the patient will have to take more than one type of antiretroviral drug.

This is called combination therapy. The reason for this is because the virus can become resistant to just one drug and that drug would no longer work. Even with combination therapy the virus can still become resistant and new medications would need to be started. The way to tell if a treatment plan is not working is by getting a blood test. The blood test will tell the doctor how high the patient's viral load is. If the viral load is high, then new antiretroviral drugs will need to be administered. Another treatment that most infected people will have to undergo is pain management. According to Avert (2009), "Pain is a major issue for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Pain can result from the virus itself, various forms of treatment, opportunistic infections and cancers" (para. 1). Depending on what is causing the pain determines the treatment options. If the antiretroviral drugs are the cause, a doctor may change the patient's drug therapy. If the virus itself is causing the pain, a doctor may prescribe Opioids to relieve the discomfort.

The treatment plans for someone with this disease is rigorous and must continue for the rest of the patient's life. One way a person can avoid these treatment plans is to not contract the disease in the first place.

Precautions and preventative measures can be implemented in a person's daily life that would protect the person from ever getting infected.

According to Avert (2009), Globally, around 11% of HIV infections are among babies who acquire the virus from their mothers; 10% result from injecting drug use; 5-10% are due to sex between men; and 5-10% occur in healthcare settings. Sex between men and women accounts for the remaining proportion – around two thirds of new infections. Using safe sex practices is the number one way to avoid being infected. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2007), "The proper and consistent use of latex or polyurethane (a type of plastic) condoms when engaging in sexual intercourse—vaginal, anal, or oral—can greatly reduce a person's risk of acquiring or transmitting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection" (para.

9). Another way to reduce the amount of people who contract HIV is through education. Education about HIV needs to start at a young age and continue throughout a person's life to ensure every precaution is taken in avoiding this virus. Only after the people are educated can a solution to this epidemic be reached. There are many resources to educate the population about HIV and AIDS. One of these resources is the American Medical Student Association (AMSA).

The AMSA has a website where people can go and get information about HIV awareness and the fight to stop the spread of this disease. One of the ways this organization helps get the message out is by participating in the World AIDS Day (WAD). According to the AMSA (2009) For World AIDS Day 2008, AMSA has prepared a toolkit, providing [people] with information and action ideas to help [people] raise awareness in [ ] schools and communities.? In the toolkit [people] will find background information on HIV [slash] AIDS, including up-to-date statistics on disease trends as well as the effects of HIV [slash] AIDS on the most vulnerable populations.(para. 2)By providing this toolkit to people, the AMSA is making people aware of the global epidemic the world is facing. This group encourages people to work together and create community projects to heighten awareness.

Without groups like this, fewer people would be educated about HIV. The more people in the world who know the facts about HIV slash AIDS and the way to prevent getting it; the better our world would be. Until the day when this disease is eradicated, educating people on prevention is the key. People around the world need to be educated about the disease by understanding the ways it is transmitted, how it affects the body, treatments, prevention and available support groups. This form of education will open people??™s eyes to the real world of HIV and begin the reversal of the epidemic.

Groups like the AMSA are paving the way so peoples dreams of a HIV slash AIDS free world is possible. ReferencesAIDS. org.? (2007).? What is AIDS.? Retrieved July? 11, 2009, from <http://www.aids.org/factSheets/101-What-is-AIDS.html>AMSA.? (2009).? World AIDS Day Toolkit.? Retrieved July? 11, 2009, from <http://www.amsa.org/global/aids/wadToolkit>.

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