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Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report

Across The Nation | HIV Cases Among Young People in Iowa Increasing [May 12, 2009]

Health officials announced recently that the number of newly recorded HIV cases among Iowans ages 15 to 24 increased by 45% in 2008 to 16, despite the widespread availability of condoms and other prevention methods, the Iowa Press-Citizen reports. In 2008, a total of 128 new HIV cases were reported, which is the highest number recorded since reporting began in 1998. The Iowa Department of Public Health reports that people ages 20 to 29 accounted for 25% of new cases in 2008.

According to the Press-Citizen, unsafe sexual practices among the state's young adult population have contributed to the spread of HIV and the number of sexually transmitted infections. Jeff Meier, associate director of the AIDS Clinical Trial Unit at University Hospitals, said that most of the cases among young people are in the non-student population. "HIV tends to run in circles of poverty, drugs and commercial sex," he said, adding, "There is obviously much less of that in the student population." Meier added that promoting condom use is just a part of a necessary comprehensive prevention strategy.

Randy Mayer -- chief of the Bureau of HIV, STD and Hepatitis at the department of public health -- said that HIV testing at publicly funded sites in the state has decreased since 1992, although HIV prevalence has increased over the same time. For 10 years, about 30% of people in the state have reported ever receiving an HIV test. One reason young people might not be getting tested is a lack of information about cost and availability, the Press-Citizen reports. Tricia Kitzmann, deputy director of the Johnson County health department, said that she hopes to see an increase in testing as the department adheres more closely to state recommendations that encourage frequent HIV testing for the entire population, instead of only populations considered to be high-risk (Carney, Iowa Press-Citizen, 5/11).

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