

AIDS - New Zealand

INTRODUCTION

This, the seventeenth issue of 'AIDS - New Zealand', provides information about the occurrence of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in New Zealand to 31 March 1992. These reports are produced quarterly by the AIDS Epidemiology Group, which is jointly funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand and the Public Health Commission. We aim to give timely and relevant details about the problem of HIV/AIDS in New Zealand. Not all tables and figures will be updated in every issue.

AIDS IN NEW ZEALAND

Thirteen people were notified as having AIDS in the first quarter of 1993. Eight were male, and five female. The total number notified since monitoring began was 373 on 31 March 1993.

Figure 1 shows the annual and cumulative numbers of notifications since 1984.

The numbers relate to the year in which we were notified of a person having AIDS, which does not always correspond to the year of diagnosis. In Figure 2 (overleaf) we show the year and

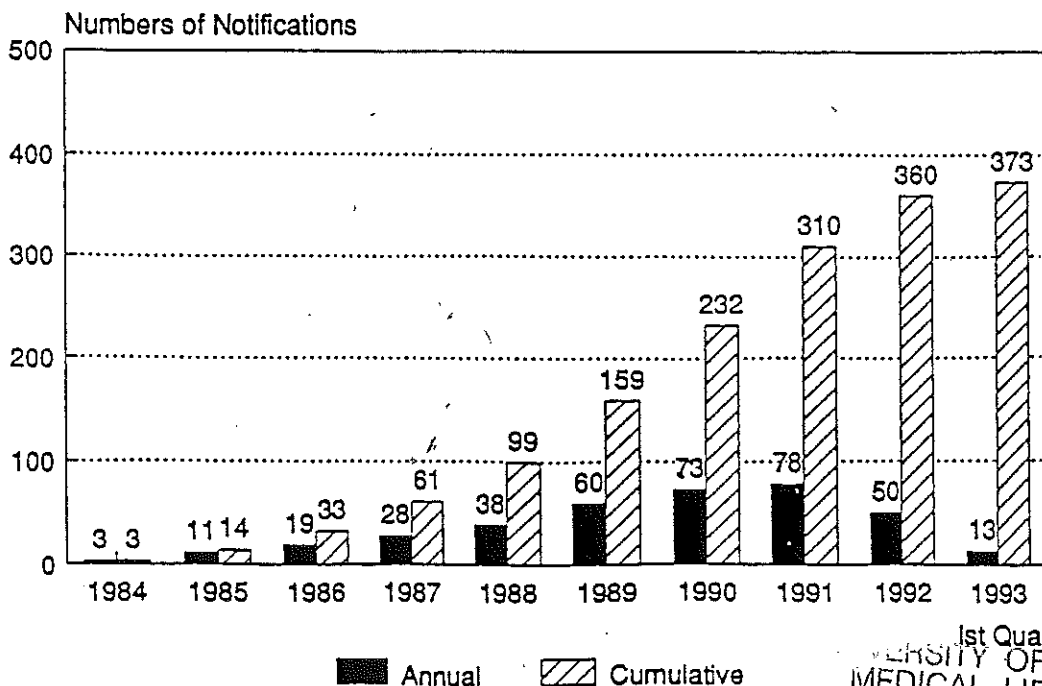


Figure 1 AIDS notifications in New Zealand

quarter of diagnosis to the end of the 1993. The drop in quarterly diagnoses of people with AIDS noted previously appears to have been sustained.

HIV POSITIVE TESTS

In the three months to 31 March 1992, 22 people were reported to be infected with HIV. Of these 22, 20 were male, and two female. The total number found to be infected in New Zealand to the end of March 1993 was 843.

Care must be taken in interpreting the HIV antibody data, as it is certain that not everyone at risk will have been tested.

RISK BEHAVIOUR CATEGORIES

Of the eight males notified in the last quarter, all were men

who were reported to have been infected through sex with other men. Of the five females, all were considered to have been heterosexually infected. Four of these five were reported to have had male sexual partners who were at increased risk of HIV infection - either being bisexual males, injecting drug users, or from countries where heterosexual infection is common. The other woman was probably infected overseas.

The risk behaviours most likely to have resulted in HIV transmission in people notified as having AIDS, and in those who were found to be infected with HIV, during the 12 months to 31 March 1993, and in total to that date, are shown in Table 1. The sex of these people is also shown. AIDS and HIV infection continue to be reported most frequently among men who have had sex with men.

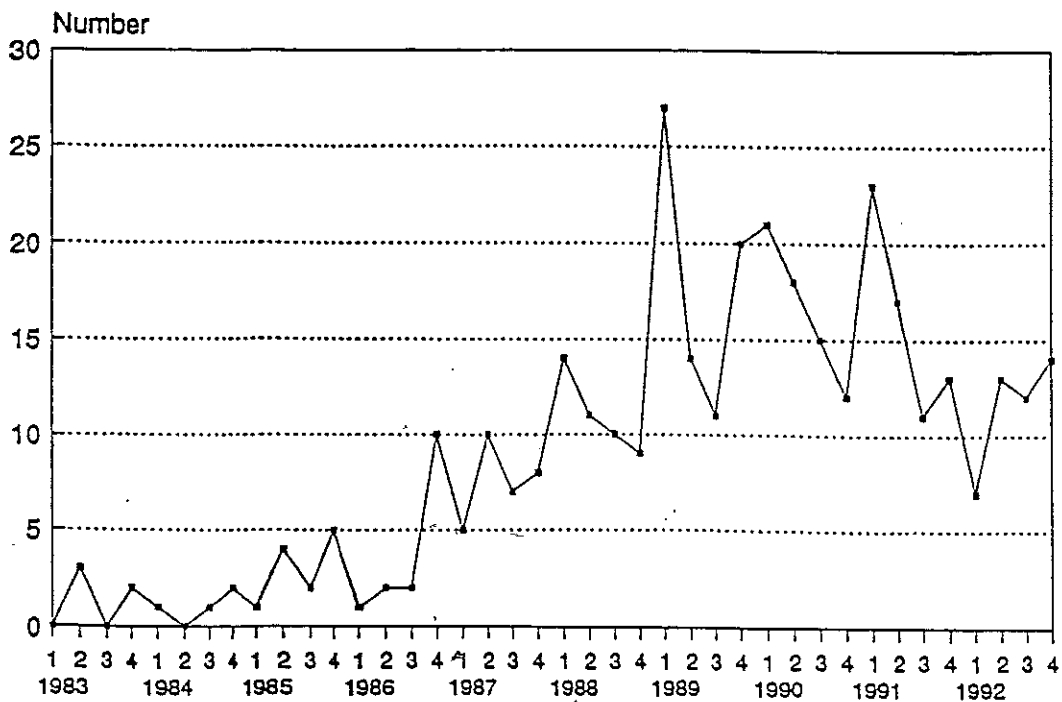


Figure 2 Number of people with AIDS by year and quarter of diagnosis

Table 1 Category of risk behaviour by date of notification of people with AIDS, and those identified as HIV antibody positive

	AIDS 12 Months to 31.3.93		Total to 31.3.93		HIV antibody positive			
	No.	%	No.	%	12 Months to 31.3.93		Total to 31.3.93	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Homo/bisexual	40	80.0	315	84.5	58	56.9	483	57.3
Homosexual & IDU*	0	0	7	1.9	0	0	7	0.8
IDU*								
Male	0	0	5	1.3	5	4.9	18	2.1
Female	1	2.0	3	0.8	1	1.0	5	0.6
Blood Product Recipient+	0	0	4	1.1	0	0	31	3.7
Transfusion Related								
Male	0	0	1	0.3	0	0	2	0.2
Female	0	0	1	0.3	0	0	5	0.6
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0.6
Heterosexual								
Male	2	4.0	12	3.2	3	2.9	11	1.3
Female	5	10.0	12	3.2	4	3.9	20	2.4
Perinatal								
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.1
Female	0	0	1	0.3	0	0	1	0.1
Not stated/unknown								
Male	1	2.0	12	3.3	26	25.5	231	27.4
Female	0	0	0	0	4	3.9	14	1.7
Unknown	0	0	0	0	1	1.0	9	1.1
TOTAL	50	100.0	373	100.0	102	100.0	843	100.0

*IDU - Injecting drug user + All Male

The information on HIV positive results is obtained by laboratories performing the confirmatory testing. The high number of people where the risk behaviour is 'unknown/not stated' reflects the lack of such information provided with the test request. It is probable that for most in this group the likely means of transmission was not in fact 'unknown', but simply 'not stated'.

OUTCOME

Of the 373 people notified to us by 31 March 1993, at the time of publication of this issue, 73 were believed to be alive, 288 were known to have died, 9 to be overseas, and the outcome for three people was uncertain as they had been lost to follow up.

The outcome by year of diagnosis is shown in Table 2. As indicated no date of diagnosis is available for 9 people.

Table 2 Outcome by year of diagnosis

Year	Presumed			
	Alive	Died	Overseas	Unk
Unknown	1	5	0	3
1983	0	5	0	0
1984	0	4	0	0
1985	0	11	1	0
1986	0	12	3	0
1987	1	29	0	0
1988	1	42	1	0
1989	5	65	2	0
1990	16	50	0	0
1991	28	18	0	0
1992	3	3	0	0
Total	73	288	9	3

SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Sexual behaviour is an important factor in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, the cause of AIDS. Members of the AIDS Epidemiology Group have recently published a study designed to find out about sexual relationships among young New Zealanders. The study is part of the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study. Over 850 young people around the age of eighteen confidentially answered questions on their sexual behaviour and experience of sexually transmitted diseases. The study was funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand, and was published in the British journal Genitourinary Medicine.

Sexual intercourse in the last 12 months was reported by 58% of the young men, and 68% of the young women. Amongst those who were sexually active, 60% of the young men reported having more than one sexual partner during the previous year, and 45% of the young women. Amongst the sexually active 23% of men and 15% of women reported four or more partners in the previous year.

It is difficult to find earlier New Zealand studies that have looked at young people in the general population. However a survey of a comparable group was carried out in 1969-70 - of first year university and teacher college students. That survey found that only 27% of males and 22.5% of females reporting ever having or attempting intercourse. Of the comparable group in the recent survey, those in their first

year at university or teacher's college, or still at school but planning to go, 59% of the males and 69% of the females reported intercourse during the previous year. These results demonstrate that sexual relationships by age 18 are much more common than even a couple of decades ago.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) were reported by 11% of the young women and by 2.5% of the young men. The rate of STDs increased with increasing numbers of sexual partners for both men and women. The rate was particularly high, over 27%, among the young women who reported five or more partners in the previous year.

Condom use is being advocated as protection against STDs. It was of concern to find that condoms were used less by the partners of young women who reported more sexual partners.

The findings suggest that there is no reason for complacency about the possibility of future spread of HIV among young New Zealanders. At present the epidemic of HIV and AIDS predominantly affects homosexual and bisexual men, and there is uncertainty about whether a heterosexual epidemic is likely.

Limiting the potential for the spread of HIV will depend on changes in sexual behaviour. The fact that there have been such major changes in the last 20 years suggests that it is possible for there to be major changes again - perhaps to delay the onset of sexual relationships, to reduce the number of partners, and to increase the use of condoms.