

AIDS - New Zealand

INTRODUCTION

This, the sixteenth 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 December 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 Department of Health. 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

Twelve people were notified as having AIDS in the final quarter of 1992. Eleven were male, and one female. The total number notified since monitoring began was 360 on 31 December 1992.

Figure 1 shows the annual and cumulative numbers of notifications since 1984. In 1992, 50 people were notified as having AIDS. This is the lowest number of annual notifications since 1988, and the first year in which the number has actually declined.

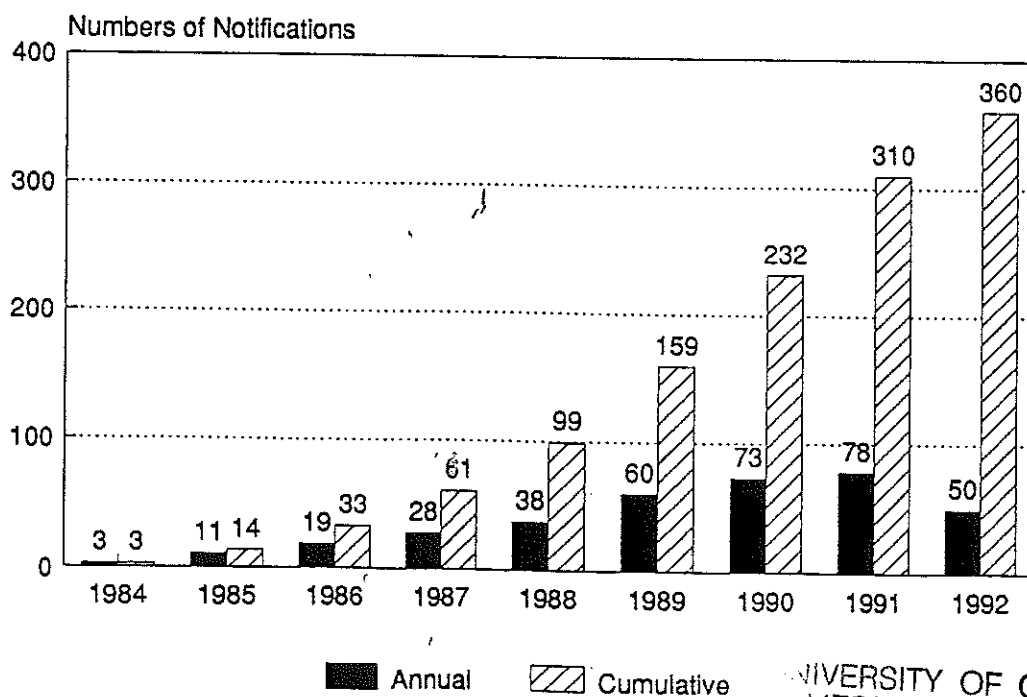


Figure 1 AIDS notifications in New Zealand

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 we show the year and quarter of diagnosis to the end of the third quarter 1992. The drop in quarterly diagnoses of people with AIDS appears to have been sustained.

HIV POSITIVE TESTS

In the three months to 31 December 1992, 25 people were reported to be infected with HIV. Of these 25, 23 were male, and two female. The total number found to be infected in New Zealand to the end of December 1992 was 821.

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 11 men notified in the last quarter, all but one were reported to have been infected through sex with other men. The remaining man was reported as being heterosexually infected, as was the one woman notified.

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 December 1992, 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.

The information on HIV positive results is obtained by laboratories performing the confirmatory testing. The high number of people where the risk

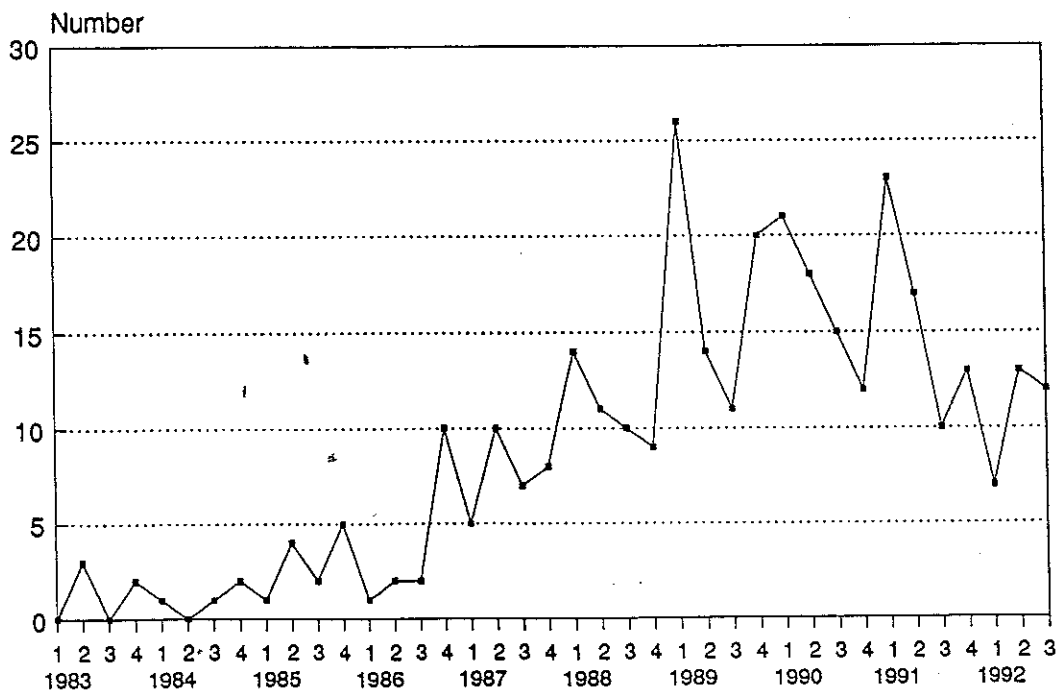


Figure 2 Number of people diagnosed with AIDS by year and quarter

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 31.12.92		Total to 31.12.92		HIV antibody positive			
	No.	%	No.	%	12 Months to 31.12.92		Total to 31.12.92	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Homo/bisexual	43	86.0	307	85.3	65	61.3	471	57.4
Homosexual & IDU*	1	2.0	7	1.9	0	0	7	0.9
IDU*								
Male	0	0	5	1.4	4	3.8	17	2.1
Female	1	2.0	3	0.8	2	1.9	5	0.6
Blood Product Recipient+	0	0	4	1.1	0	0	31	3.8
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	3	6.0	12	3.3	2	1.9	10	1.2
Female	1	2.0	7	1.9	3	2.8	19	2.3
Perinatal								
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.1
Female	0	0	1	0.3	0	0	1	0.1
Unknown/Not stated								
Male	1	2.0	12	3.3	25	23.6	225	27.4
Female	0	0	0	0	4	3.8	13	1.6
Unknown	0	0	0	0	1	0.9	9	1.1
TOTAL	50	100.0	360	100.0	106	100.0	821	100.0

*IDU - Injecting drug user + All Male

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

The outcome for the 360 people notified as having AIDS by 31 December 1992, as known to us at the time of publication, is shown in Table 2.

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF AIDS IN NEW ZEALAND

Table 3 (overleaf) shows the numbers, and rates per 100,000

population, of people notified with AIDS from the geographic areas which comprise the four Regional Health Authorities (RHA). The population figures used to derive the rates have been taken from the populations within the area health board boundaries for 1989, that have been combined to form the RHAs.

Table 2 Outcome of people with AIDS

Alive	69
Known to have died	278
Lost to follow up	3
Overseas	10
Total	360

Table 3 Regional distribution of number and notification rate (per 100,000 total population) of people notified with AIDS to 31.12.92

Regional Health Authority	12 Months to 31.12.92	Total to 31.12.92	Cumulative Notification Rate per 100,000
Northern	25	203	19.9
Midland	8	36	5.2
Central	16	97	11.1
Southern	1	24	3.2
Total	50	360	10.8

AIDS IN AUSTRALIA

The pattern of the AIDS epidemic in Australia appears to be very similar to that in New Zealand. A report from the National Centre for Epidemiology and Clinical Research in Australia describing the epidemic there has recently been published in the Medical Journal of Australia (4 January 1993).

By the end of 1991, 3160 people had been reported as having been diagnosed with AIDS. This was a cumulative incidence rate of 18 per 100,000 total population for the country as a whole. AIDS was not found to be evenly distributed throughout Australia. The cumulative incidence rates varied between 32 per 100,000 in New South Wales, and 3.5 per 100,000 in Tasmania. Similar wide variation in rates is seen in New Zealand (Table 3).

In Australia 97% of the people with AIDS to that time were male, with 91% of those being adults or adolescents who reported having had sex with men. The comparative rates for New Zealand are currently 97% and 90%.

Of the 98 of females diagnosed with AIDS, 40% had received contaminated blood, blood products or tissues, and 22% reported injecting drug use. At least 22% had been infected through heterosexual contact.

Of the 21 children with AIDS, 13 had been infected through receiving blood or blood products infected with HIV, and the remaining 8 children were infected around the time of birth from their mothers.

Of all the people with AIDS, just under 5% reported injecting drug use, of whom half also reported sex with men. In New Zealand 4% of people with AIDS reported injecting drug use.

In the early years of the epidemic in Australia the annual incidence of AIDS rose rapidly. However since 1988, the increase in the total number of people newly diagnosed with AIDS has been less marked. This pattern was clearly seen for the men who had been infected through sex with men. However, among people notified as being heterosexually infected there had not been such a plateau.

For further information about the occurrence of AIDS in New Zealand, contact Dr Nigel Dickson, AIDS Epidemiology Group, Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, University of Otago Medical School, PO Box 913, Dunedin, New Zealand
Phone: (03) 479 7211, or FAX: (03) 479 7298 (Please note new Fax number)