

WHO/Bulletin - Young people with HIV taking big risks

Medicine

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GENEVA – Adolescents and young adults with HIV are at high risk of treatment failure and of transmitting the virus to their sexual partners, according to research published today in the international public health journal, the Bulletin of the World Health Organization.

The study, conducted in Haiti, showed that 12 months after beginning therapy, only 106 (73%) of 146 patients were still in medical care (the remainder having died or left therapy) and, of these, only 45% adhered well to life-prolonging antiretroviral treatment, 51% had virologic failure and 73% engaged in unsafe sex. Young people had twice the rate of virologic failure as older patients from the same clinic.

“Treatment adherence in young people is often aggravated by psychological and social issues including depression, sexual abuse and lack of family support,” says one of the study’s authors, Dr Daniel W. Fitzgerald, from Weill Cornell Medical College, New York, United States of America. “Strategies targeting their special needs are urgently needed. In Haiti, we have opened an adolescent HIV clinic providing medical and psycho-social care with support from UNICEF.”

More than half of all new HIV infections in the world now occur in adolescents and young adults, and are acquired predominantly through sexual contact. In sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, the regions of the world most severely affected by HIV infection, two-thirds of young people infected with HIV-1 are women.

Read the study here: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/86/12/en/index.html>

The Bulletin of the World Health Organization is an international journal of public health with a special focus on developing countries. It is one of the world’s leading public health journals and the flagship periodical of the World Health Organization.

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