New HIV Diagnoses Spike Alarmingly Among London Gays

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The number of new HIV diagnoses among gay men in London is rising rapidly—a shift possibly due in part to expanded testing but also likely influenced by a heavy drug culture's contribution to high-risk sex, The Lancet reports. New data released by Public Health England reports that 1,420 gay men in London were diagnosed with HIV in 2011, compared with 1,720 new diagnoses in 2012, representing a 21 percent spike. A revised figure for 2012 could eventually put the number of new infections at 1,900 in 2012, which would translate to a 33 percent one-year increase.

Across the United Kingdom, 3,240 men who have sex with men (MSM) were diagnosed with HIV in 2012, up 8 percent from 3,010 diagnoses in 2011.

The increase in HIV diagnoses among London gay men may be partly the result of a 17 percent uptick in HIV tests, over 43,000 of which were conducted among the population in 2012, compared with 37,000 the year before. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that recreational or club drug use among gay men in London is an increasing problem and may contribute to the spread of HIV. This includes smoking, injecting or snorting drugs such as crystal meth and mephedrone, which often takes place in connection with sex parties.

To read the Lancet paper, click here.

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