Male Call

What’s causing the HIV spike among men who have sex with men?

April 1, 2008 By Bob Ickes

Last year, two reports showed increases in HIV/AIDS among men who have sex with men (MSM). *The Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) said the MSM caseload had risen by 13 percent over the previous four years. A few days later, the National HIV Conference said black MSM are seven times more likely than white MSM to be infected—though no more likely to have high-risk sex.

JAMA offered various explanations: complacency among men who haven’t lived through ’80s and early-’90s AIDS horrors; slack testing; and prevention “fatigue.”

The black MSM data came from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Gregorio Millett and colleagues found a large discrepancy between sexual risk taking and HIV rates in black MSM. Explanations include: many black MSM have sex only with black MSM; black MSM are less likely to be on HAART; and the late stage at which black MSM learn their status.

Rayford Kytle, a POZ reader from Washington, DC, points out: “That issue of JAMA included a piece by prevention experts calling for ‘the end of stigma toward MSM.’” Then there’s good old-fashioned education and awareness.

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