NYC Almost Ends HIV in Injection Drug Users, But Only Among Whites

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Syringe exchange and opioid substitution programs in New York City have practically eliminated HIV infection among white injection drug users, while prevalence rates remain high among black IDUs, aidsmap reports. Publishing their findings in PLOS ONE, researchers followed 703 IDUs at a Brooklyn hospital between 2007 and 2014.

The study participants reported first starting injecting drugs after 1995, the year when New York City introduced syringe exchange. Forty-two percent were white, 46 percent Latino and 12 percent African-American.

The white participants had a 1 percent HIV prevalence (compared with 2 percent among all New York adults). The HIV prevalence was 4 percent among Latino participants and 17 percent among African Americans.

After taking into account various factors, the researchers found that African-American participants were 19 times more likely and Latinos were 4.4 times more likely to be HIV positive than whites. The women were 3.2 times more likely to have HIV than the men. The researchers believe that the high rate of HIV among blacks is largely driven by sexual transmission, though the sex disparity could not be explained by differences in sexual behavior.

Fifty-four percent of the cohort had hepatitis C virus (HCV), making it 13.5 times more prevalent than HIV. Sixty percent of the HIV-positive participants were coinfected with hep C.

Based on the hep C rates, the researchers calculated that three-quarters of the HIV-positive participants had acquired HIV through sex.

The HIV acquisition rate dropped 30 percent each year of the study.

To read the aidsmap article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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