Paying South African Girls to Stay in School Doesn’t Lower HIV Rate

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A program that offered cash incentives for girls living in a poor section of South Africa failed to lower the HIV infection rate among them, MedPage Today reports. Researchers presented findings from the study of 2,448 girls, ages 14 to 17, at the 8th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Previous research has found that greater secondary schooling translates to lower HIV incidence among sub-Saharan African youths.

The participants, inhabitants of the Mpumalanga Province in northeastern South Africa, were randomized to receive $10 each month and $20 for their families if they attended school 80 percent of the time, or to receive no incentives.

In the region, about 46 percent of women and 48 percent of men between 35 and 39 years old are HIV positive.

Fifty-nine girls in the incentives arm contracted the virus, as did 48 in the control arm. The difference was not statistically significant, meaning it could have occurred by chance.

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