AIDS Misconceptions Still Rampant in China

November 19, 2008

A recent Chinese survey reveals discrimination toward people living with HIV and misconceptions about the virus despite China's public education efforts, Xinhua News Agency reports.

The survey interviewed more than 6,000 students in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Wuhan, Zhengzhou and Kunming. It was collaboratively conducted by the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria, the China HIV/AIDS Media Partnership, Renmin University and UNAIDS.

Though 80 percent of participants said they know that the virus can be transmitted through unprotected sex and contaminated syringes, 18 percent still believed that HIV could be transmitted through sneezes and coughs. Thirty percent believed that positive students should be barred from the general classroom.

"These data are really a cause for concern," said Bernhard Schwartlander, UNAIDS coordinator for China. "There are still many misconceptions around AIDS among the population, which contribute to stigma and discrimination."

According to the Ministry of Health's statistics, at the end of 2007 about 700,000 people were living with HIV in China, with sexual transmission being the most common means of infection.

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