Study: Neglecting IV Drug Users Drives New HIV Infections Worldwide

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Governments that offer no HIV prevention programming for injection drug users face a potentially devastating public health crisis of increasing HIV incidence, according to a study published in *The Lancet* medical journal and reported by Reuters. UNAIDS estimates that about 30 percent of HIV transmission outside of sub-Saharan Africa is driven by unsafe injection drug use practices.

“Although the number of countries with core HIV prevention services is growing, the level of coverage in injecting drug users is poor in many countries,” said Bradley Mathers of the University of New South Wales, Australia, who led the study. The study calls HIV among drug users a “critical health problem” in countries such as Russia, China, Malaysia and Thailand.

Experts recommend governments take prevention or harm reduction steps such as providing clean needles, condoms and methadone to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS.

“HIV prevention treatment and care services for injecting drug users are clinically effective, but to exert a population-level effect they need to be delivered to scale,” researchers wrote. The current level is “not sufficient to prevent, halt or turn around the HIV epidemic among this at-risk population.”

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/drug-use-lancet-study-hiv-18082-3941