



HIV Cluster Confirmed in West Virginia Among Injection Drug Users

Cabell County saw about 28 new HIV cases, but nearly 1,800 people living there inject drugs.

March 11, 2019 By [Trent Straube](#)

An HIV cluster of 28 known cases has been confirmed in Cabell County, West Virginia, according to that state's public health bureau. The cases, which were tracked from January 2018 to the present, are mostly confined to people who inject drugs, [reports the Charleston Gazette-Mail](#).

Although 28 cases may not seem like a large number, it falls well above the average eight diagnoses reported annually the past five years. The concern is that HIV might spread among the county's population of active injection drug users, which is estimated to be about 1,800.

Michael Kilkenny, MD, the physician director of the Cabell-Huntington Health Department, told the newspaper that systems are already in place to help treat substance use disorders, to test people for HIV and to get them on treatment if they are HIV positive. He noted that the county did not want to see a repeat of the 2015 outbreak in Scott County, Indiana, where 181 people contracted the virus, mostly through sharing needles.

An HIV cluster, as the paper describes it, is generally confined to a specific population, such as people who inject drugs, while an outbreak is characterized by the spread of HIV beyond that initial population group.

Other regional areas have experienced HIV clusters, as has nearby metro Cincinnati. This latest cluster also represents a trend in new HIV cases. Whereas the virus used to be spread mostly among men who have sex with men, new cases are increasingly occurring among injection drug users.

For related articles, see "[Alarming Jump in HIV Cases in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky](#)" and "[What's Happening With the Opioid Crisis in Charleston, West Virginia?](#)"

For more about the Indiana HIV and hepatitis C outbreak, read "[Can Rural America Learn to Live With Needle Exchange](#)" or click [#Indiana](#).

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