Prevalence of People in NYC With Detectable HIV Is Falling

Researchers spotlight the proportion of the population with unsuppressed HIV as an indicator of local transmission risk.

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The prevalence of people in New York City who have HIV and a detectable viral load has fallen in recent years. Looking for a data-driven way to analyze a local population's risk of new cases of HIV, researchers sought to shift the focus of surveillance data away from the total HIV population and onto the proportion of people living in a city who have unsuppressed HIV.

Fully suppressing HIV reduces the risk of transmission to an extremely low level; the risk may in fact be zero.

Publishing their findings in the Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes, researchers analyzed New York City HIV surveillance data on people 18 and older from 2010 to 2014.

The estimated population of adults living with HIV increased from 79,100 in 2010 to 81,700 in 2014. Over the same period, the overall New York City population grew, so the proportion of New Yorkers with the virus, or HIV prevalence, remained steady at 1.22 percent.

The estimated proportion of the city's overall adult population living with unsuppressed HIV fell steadily from 0.49 percent in 2010 to 0.34 percent in 2014.

In 2014, men had a higher HIV prevalence than women (1.86 percent versus 0.65 percent) and a higher prevalence of unsurpressed HIV (0.51 percent versus 0.18 percent). Compared with whites, Blacks and Latinos had a respective 5.8-fold and 2.7-fold greater HIV prevalence among men and a 26.3-fold and 10-fold greater prevalence of the virus among women.

The study authors concluded: "As antiretroviral treatment continues to expand, programs should consider using the prevalence of unsupressed HIV to measure population-level transmission risk."

To read the study abstract, click here.

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