Sequestration Hits HIV Hard

October 21, 2013

The federal budget cuts known as sequestration have sent devastating ripples through the scientific research community, seriously hampering efforts to combat diseases such as AIDS, The Washington Post reports. If the cuts continue through the 2014 fiscal year, amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research, projects dire consequences for the world at large, including greater deaths related to AIDS, increased HIV infections and other hampered disease-prevention efforts.

When President Obama signed the stopgap measure, or “continuing resolution,” to fund the government through January 15, he and Congress perpetuated sequestration cuts that went into effect in March. At that time, the National Institutes of Health’s (NIH) budget contracted by 5.5 percent, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) budget fell 5 percent and the budget of the National Science Foundation dropped 2.1 percent.

The amfAR report states that a 7.3 percent cut to global health funding in the 2014 fiscal year budget that would be a consequence of further sequestration “would have a negligible impact on the U.S. budget deficit but serious negative implications for the health of millions of people.”

Cuts in the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), amfAR projects, would result in over 225,000 fewer people receiving treatment for HIV, which would lead to over 52,000 AIDS-related deaths and over 100,000 orphans. A total of 56,200 fewer HIV-positive mothers on antiretrovirals would lead them to transmit the virus to 17,250 infants and would result in close to 9,000 child deaths. The cuts would also reduce the available pentavalent vaccines (which offer protection against five diseases: diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, hepatitis B and Haemophilius influenzae type b) by 1.4 million, the number of insecticide-treated bed nets by 2.5 million and the number of people receiving tuberculosis treatment by 85,500.

To read the Washington Post article, click here.

To read the amfAR report, click here.

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