

Study: HIV on the rise among college students

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STAFF WRITER

The number of HIV cases in black, male college students is more prevalent, according to a recent study, but experts warn that anyone sexually active should exercise caution.

The study, titled "Transmission on Campus: Insights from Tracking HIV Incidence in North Carolina," included 37 schools in the state. Specific numbers for each school were not disclosed. The study examined 998 males in the state, 84 of them being college students.

There were six cases of male college students reported to the N.C. Health Department in 2000. Preliminary numbers for 2003 have already reported 30 HIV cases.

Sixteen percent of the cases are black males between the ages of 18 and 30 who reported having sex with other men, but don't necessarily identify themselves as being gay.

The study showed that 40 percent of the HIV positive college students reported having sex with women, making a large number of women at risk for contracting HIV. But the study stated that there

have been only five women statewide who have been affected by HIV from 2000-03.

The fact that males do not identify themselves as gay, even when having had sex with males, makes messages on HIV prevention ineffective because males do not think the message is relevant to them, said Peter Leone, medical director for the North Carolina HIV/STD Prevention and Care branch and one of the authors of the study.

The national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified around 4,500 cases of black males, ages 18-25, having sex with males.

Karlie Stanton, spokeswoman for the CDC, said publicity and HIV prevention messages should be sensitive to the way people identify themselves to be effective.

Leone said messages should be rephrased. "If you're sexually active, you need to be concerned of HIV."

CDC statistics also show that even though blacks account for 12 percent of the country's population, 55 percent of people with HIV are black. Thirty-one percent of those with HIV are white and 12 percent are Hispanic.

Stanton said the black and Hispanic population face more challenges to stay protected because they generally face poverty, do not have access to health care and have a higher connection to sexually transmitted diseases.

But Leone said the college student outbreak is not exclusive to blacks. He said high-risk sexual activity is a main reason for the increased HIV cases and added that lack of perception of risk is a contributing factor to the outbreak.

"People don't see other folks dying of HIV or don't know other people with the disease," he said.

The CDC statistics show there have been 40,000 new HIV cases each year for the last decade. Half of the cases are among people younger than 25 years old.

Stanton said the reason college students might be more at risk to acquire HIV is high-risk sexual activity: unprotected sex, multiple sex partners or young women choosing partners older than themselves.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Haiti leaders warn of coup

Seeking help from U.N., U.S., France

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Haiti's prime minister said Tuesday that the country is in the throes of a coup and needs international help to contend with a bloody uprising that has claimed 57 lives. But the United States and France expressed reluctance to send troops to put down the rebellion.

Aid agencies called for urgent international action, warning that Haiti is on "the verge of a generalized civil war." The U.N. refugee agency met with officials in Washington, D.C., to discuss how to confront a feared exodus of Haitians.

On Tuesday, airlines in Port-au-Prince canceled flights to the northern port of Cap-Haitien, Haiti's second largest city, after witnesses in the barricaded city saw a boat approach and rumors swept the town that rebels were about to attack.

In the western port of St. Marc, a U.S. missionary said his life has been threatened by supporters of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

"We are witnessing the coup d'etat machine in motion," Prime Minister Yvon Neptune said Tuesday, urging the international

community "to show it really wants peace and stability."

Haiti's 5,000-member police force appears unable to stem the revolt, but Aristide and Neptune stopped short of asking for military intervention.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said Tuesday, "There is frankly no enthusiasm right now for sending in military or police forces to put down the violence."

Powell said the international community wants to see "a political solution" and only then would willing nations offer a police presence to implement such an agreement.

Powell spoke by telephone with French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, who called an emergency meeting in Paris on Tuesday to weigh the risks of sending peacekeepers and discuss how otherwise to help Haiti, an impoverished former colony that is home to 2,000 French citizens.

He said France had 4,000 troops in its Caribbean territories of Martinique and Guadeloupe trained in humanitarian work who could work with a U.N. humanitarian mission.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Tuesday the world

body plans to "become much more actively engaged" in Haiti's crisis. Officials from several U.N. agencies went to the country Feb. 8 to assess the humanitarian situation and are expected to return to report at the end of the week.

U.S. Ambassador James Foley said Tuesday that Washington is ready to give \$500,000 in humanitarian aid to Haiti through the United Nations.

"We are calling for a truce. It doesn't mean that we want to maintain the status quo. We want a radical change in the country," Foley said.

"Haiti cannot continue living without a state of law, with politicized and demoralized police, armed gangs."

The United States has staged three military interventions in Haiti, the last in 1994, when it sent 20,000 troops to end a military dictatorship that had ousted Aristide and to halt an influx of Haitian boat people to Florida.

Aristide, who was wildly popular when he became Haiti's first freely elected leader in 1990, has lost support since his party swept flawed legislative elections in 2000. He is accused of using police and armed militants to stifle dissent and allowing corruption to fund lavish lifestyles for his cronies.

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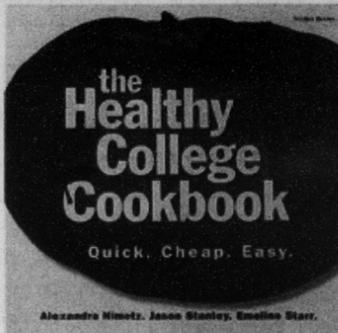


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