

Perinatal Network

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AIDS 2004 — Lost in Translation: The Good News & the Bad News

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Medical advances can enable persons diagnosed with HIV infection to live longer lives. This is the “good news” but it is somehow getting lost in the translation. More and more teachers are reporting the “bad news.” Students now view HIV infection and AIDS as something a person just lives with instead of something that a person dies from.

Teachers continue to report that many students don't realize their behaviors are putting them at risk. With powerful antiviral medication prolonging HIV-infected persons' lives, some students view HIV infection like diabetes—you just take medicine for it. They do not realize that these medicines must be taken 100% of the time to work and prevent the HIV infection from becoming resistant to them. The medicines are also very toxic, can cause kidney stones and/or destroy the liver. Some still think of AIDS as a disease only gay persons or intravenous drug users get.

Everyone who works with youth has to continue to share the facts:

HIV/AIDS 2004

- 123,000 young adults develop AIDS in their 20s
- half of new HIV infections are in young people 15-24 yrs. These young people were infected as teens.
- 2 teens get infected each hour.
- Women are the fastest growing HIV+ group.
- 52% of women are infected by heterosexual sex.
- African American & Hispanic youth, 13-19 yrs., are 15% of U.S. teens but they have 67% of HIV infections.
- Only 44% of HIV-positive teens take their antiviral medicine all of the time.
- Teens having anal sex or using alcohol & drugs have a higher risk of STD/HIV infection.
- The greater the number of sexual partners, the greater the risk of HIV infection.
- Most teens don't know they are infected.

Let teens know where they can get help

Montgomery County's Dennis Avenue Health Center STD Clinic (240-777-1760) provides free, confidential, counseling, testing and treatment by appointment. Located at 2000 Dennis Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20902

AIDS Hotline for Teens – M-F, 3-7 PM , 1-800-234-TEEN