

Stichting HIV Monitoring: Number of new HIV diagnoses remains high but is not increasing

Amsterdam, 23 November 2012 - Stichting HIV Monitoring (SHM) reports in its Monitoring Report 2012 that the annual number of new HIV diagnoses remains high with a projected 1067 newly registered diagnoses in 2011, but is not increasing in comparison to previous years. Similar numbers were reported in 2009 and 2010 with around 1100 new diagnoses per year. In men who have sex with men (MSM), 714 new diagnoses were recorded in 2011, which is also comparable to previous years. MSM still make up the largest risk group for HIV in the Netherlands.

There are currently an estimated 25,000 HIV-infected people in the Netherlands. Around a third of these are currently not in care and many are unaware that they are infected. Of those in care, there is a small proportion that are untreated or are treated but have poor HIV suppression. This means that in nearly half of the HIV-infected people in the Netherlands the virus is not suppressed and it is likely that these people contribute to the vast majority of new infections.

Frank de Wolf, Director of Stichting HIV Monitoring: "I am optimistic about the effect of treatment for people with HIV. Apart from being beneficial to the patient, treatment has an effect on the spread of HIV. At the same time we see that the epidemic continues. The priorities remain that people are aware of the risks they run, are regularly tested and start treatment if they test positive."

Epidemic not yet under control

The HIV epidemic in the Netherlands is concentrated in the group MSM. In total, the annual number of newly registered HIV infections among MSM is not increasing, but is also not decreasing. Although the number of new diagnoses among MSM in the age group 35-44 years showed a gradual decline, the number of new diagnoses among young adult MSM up to 25 years of age and among MSM 55 years and older is increasing.

The number of new diagnoses in heterosexuals is gradually decreasing, presumably due to decreased immigration from regions where HIV is endemic, such as sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2009 the number of registered HIV diagnoses is higher among heterosexual men and women of Dutch origin than that among people originating from endemic regions.

Late HIV diagnosis

The percentage of people diagnosed with HIV at a late stage of infection has halved since 1996, but 43% are still diagnosed with a weakened immune system or even AIDS. Late diagnosis leads to a late start of treatment with only a poor recovery of the immune system. The high percentage of late diagnoses emphasizes that testing of people at risk is still not optimal.

Life expectancy

Deaths due to HIV and AIDS have decreased significantly since the introduction of antiretroviral therapy, but death-rates in people with HIV are still higher than the general population (when adjusted for age and gender). Living with HIV has improved significantly over the past 10 years through access to medication that achieves a high

level of viral suppression. The current combination antiretroviral therapy (cART) is easier to use, has fewer side effects and has perhaps less long-term toxicity.

HIV drug resistance

Around 10% of people on treatment experience treatment failure and 30% of them are estimated to harbour HIV resistant to at least one antiretroviral drug. Currently screening for drug resistance only takes place in around 30% of patients with treatment failure. It is important that screening is carried out more frequently so that patients can be placed on the best possible treatment regimen.

Notes to editors:

HIV in the Netherlands: an overview

Registered HIV-patients in the Netherlands		
Mid year	Total registered patients (incl. deaths and loss to follow-up)	Patients in care (with or without therapy)
2007	13.264	10.095
2008	14.960	11.349
2009	16.129	12.405
2010	17.327	13.035
2011	18.735	14.610
2012	19.985	16.169

Yearly number of new HIV diagnoses in adults					
Year	MSM	Hetero- sexual**	IDU***	Other/ unknown	Total
2007	750	353	13	62	1178
2008	820	343	5	61	1229
2009	736	322	5	58	1120
2010*	743	318	7	54	1122
2011*	714	281	2	70	1067

* Projections based on the current state of registration of new HIV diagnoses

** This includes men and women

*** Intravenous drug users

Monitoring Report 2012

SHM's Monitoring Report 2012 is available for download from SHM's website, www.hiv-monitoring.nl. A Dutch summary of the report is also available via the website.

NCHIV 2012

Frank de Wolf, Director of Stichting HIV Monitoring, will present the main points and conclusions of the Monitoring Report 2012 at the 6th Netherlands Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Prevention and Treatment (NCHIV 2012). NCHIV 2012 will take place on Tuesday, 27 November at the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) in Amsterdam. Media are invited to attend the event. Please visit www.nchiv.org for further information.

About Stichting HIV Monitoring

Stichting HIV Monitoring (SHM), the Dutch HIV monitoring foundation, makes an important and necessary contribution to healthcare for HIV-infected people living in the Netherlands. Through the collection and maintenance of anonymous data from HIV patients throughout the country, SHM's work contributes significantly to the knowledge of HIV and enables treating

physicians to assess and improve patient care. Research conducted by SHM results in tangible advice geared to medical professionals and patients, government and healthcare at large. Results of SHM's research and those of others are presented regularly in medical journals and at international meetings and conferences. Furthermore, SHM delivers contributions to global HIV research. SHM also monitors hepatitis B and C co-infections through the same systematic approach and collects some international HIV data, notably in Curaçao. SHM's yearly monitoring report provides valuable input for the development of HIV care and prevention policies within the Netherlands and the EU.

Contact

Media inquiries:

Arie Bos, +31 (0)20 5664172 / +31 (0) 6 25037057 / arie@bosmediaproducties.nl