

NARRATIVE REPORT

HIV / AIDS has constituted a public health priority for the Government of Cyprus since 1986 when the first National AIDS programme (NAP) was prepared in cooperation with WHO.

The response to the epidemic has been multisectoral and the objectives of the current strategic plan encompass the prevention of the transmission of the virus and alleviation of the personal and social impact of the epidemic.

The general aim of health education programmes is to assist youth and other population groups to develop safe attitudes and behaviours. A peer education programme is implemented among students aged 16 to 17 years at the public secondary education.

Specialized healthcare to HIV seropositive people, is provided at Gregorios Clinic for HIV/ AIDS in Larnaca Hospital.

According to the standards of the World Health Organization, Cyprus is placed among countries of low prevalence of HIV infection.

The factors that determine the extent and profile of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Cyprus are :

- (a) the risky sexual behaviour, which has been the main, almost exclusive way of transmission of the virus until now
- (b) the increased risk of transmission of the virus in certain groups of the population that have their own particularities and problems(eg IDU, MSM)
- (c) the growing pace of population movement to and from Cyprus and across the line that divides the government – controlled area from the Turkish occupied areas.

The epidemiological surveillance for HIV/AIDS in Cyprus covers the period from 1986 to the present.

From 1986 until the end of December 2010, 681 cases of HIV/AIDS were diagnosed in Cyprus. The number of new cases recorded in 2010 is 41 of which 34 are residents of Cyprus and 7 are non residents.

Of the 681 recorded cases, 410 concern people who reside or used to reside permanently in Cyprus and 271 live abroad.

Among the 410 HIV positive people who are residents of Cyprus, 326 are men and 84 are women which gives a ratio of 4 men to 1 woman.

HIV infection affects mainly young people: around 67% of all the infected permanent residents in Cyprus were between the age 20-39 at diagnosis.

Among the 410 cases permanent residents that were diagnosed as HIV positive by the end of 2010 and presented themselves to Gregorios Clinic for treatment, there are 201 who are currently being treated and the number of people known to have died, either from AIDS or from other natural causes is 105.

These provide an indication of the prevalence that is the number with HIV currently living in Cyprus . However, due to the long asymptomatic phase of HIV infection, it is expected that some persons who have been infected are not aware of the fact and remain unreported for a certain period of time. For this reason the actual number of cases is considered to be higher than that of the diagnosed cases of HIV infection.

Sexual contact remains the main mode of transmission of the virus which accounts for more than 93% of the seropositive people (60% heterosexual and 33% homosexual contact).