

Update on the HIV/AIDS Situation in Singapore

NEW CASES OF HIV INFECTION REPORTED THIS YEAR

In the first ten months of 2002, another 189 Singaporeans were detected to be HIV infected, including two children. About 87% of the new cases detected this year were males and 13% were females. Two children were diagnosed to be HIV infected.

Sexual transmission remains the main mode of HIV transmission among

Singaporeans. Of the 189 cases reported this year, almost 96% acquired the infection through the sexual route with heterosexual transmission accounting for 76% of infections, homosexual transmission 15% and bisexual transmission 5%. The remaining 4% were due to intravenous drug use (3%) and perinatal transmission (1%).

Among those who acquired the infection through the sexual route,

about 86% had sexual exposure to prostitutes (locally and overseas) and/or casual sex partners.

Those aged between 30 to 49 years of age accounted for about 54% of all new cases reported this year. Those aged between 50 to 59 years accounted for 18% and 20 to 29 years accounted for about 15% of new cases this year. Of the new cases, about 45% were single while about 39% were married, 12% were divorced and 4% were widowed.

Table 1. Number of Singaporeans Reported with HIV Infection/AIDS (1985 – October 2002).

Year	HIV/AIDS				AIDS			
	Male	Female	Total	Rate*	Male	Female	Total	Rate*
1985	2	0	2	0.8	0	0	0	
1986	6	1	7	2.8	1	0	1	0.4
1987	10	0	10	3.9	3	0	3	1.2
1988	15	0	15	5.8	6	0	6	2.3
1989	9	1	10	3.8	5	0	5	1.9
1990	17	0	17	6.2	8	0	8	2.9
1991	39	3	42	15.0	12	0	12	4.3
1992	49	6	55	19.3	17	1	18	6.3
1993	58	6	64	22.0	19	3	22	7.6
1994	76	10	86	29.0	44	4	48	16.2
1995	102	9	111	36.8	51	5	56	18.6
1996	123	16	139	45.3	89	3	92	30.0
1997	157	16	173	55.4	80	8	88	28.2
1998	167	32	199	62.7	112	13	125	39.4
1999	171	35	206	63.9	125	15	140	43.5
2000	193	33	226	69.3	128	15	143	43.8
2001	204	33	237	71.4	136	16	152	45.8
Oct 2002	164	25	189		108	13	121	
Total	1562	226	1788		944	96	1040	

* per million population

** including the 1,040 AIDS cases

TOTAL NUMBER OF HIV INFECTED SINGAPOREANS

This brings the total number of HIV infected Singaporeans including 17 children to 1,788 as at 31 October 2002 (Table 1). Of these, 681 were asymptomatic carriers, 421 have full-blown AIDS and 686 have died.

Heterosexual transmission has been the most common mode of HIV transmission among Singaporeans since 1991 (Table 2). Most of these cases contracted the infection through casual sex and sex with prostitutes in Singapore and overseas.

The majority (1562 cases) of the HIV infected Singaporeans were males and 226 were females (Table 3) giving a

Table 2. Distribution of HIV Infected Singaporeans by Modes of Transmission (1985 – October 2002).

Mode of Transmission	1985-1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002 Oct	Total
Sexual Orientation														
Heterosexual	16	22	37	47	62	83	103	135	163	154	194	191	144	1351
Homosexual	31	11	12	6	15	17	12	12	12	29	12	22	28	219
Bisexual	12	3	3	9	9	10	20	15	19	14	16	16	9	155
Intravenous drug use	1	3	1	2	0	0	4	5	1	6	3	6	6	38
Blood Transfusion	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
Renal Transplant overseas	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Perinatal (mother to child)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	3	1	2	2	17
Total	61	42	55	64	86	111	139	173	199	206	226	237	189	1788

Table 3. HIV Infected Singaporeans by Marital Status (1985 – October 2002).

Marital Status	Male	Female	Total
Single	948 (60.7%)	45 (19.9%)	993 (55.5%)
Married	435 (27.8%)	142 (62.8%)	577 (32.3%)
Divorced/Sep	140 (9.0%)	21 (9.3%)	161 (9.0%)
Widowed	39 (2.5%)	18 (8.0%)	57 (3.2%)
Total	1562 (100.0%)	226 (100.0%)	1788 (100.0%)

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sex ratio of seven males to one female. Among the males, 61% were single. For the females, however, the majority (63%) were married.

About 84% were Chinese, 7% were Malays, 5% were Indians and 4% Others (Table 4). About 20%

of the HIV infected Singaporeans were working in the sales and service sector and another 18% were production craftsmen and plant/machine assemblers (Table 6).

MINISTRY'S ADVICE

The Ministry would like to emphasise that the only way to avoid AIDS is

to remain faithful to one's spouse and to avoid casual sex and sex with prostitutes. A HIV infected person looks and feels normal during the early stage of the infection. It is therefore not possible to tell if a person is infected or not by looking at his/her appearance.

The Ministry would also like to remind those who are at risk of being infected with the HIV virus not to donate blood. Those who are at risk of being infected are advised to see their doctors for HIV screening. All women who are pregnant are also encouraged to go for HIV screening so that measures to prevent transmission from mother to infant could be taken early for those who are found to be HIV infected. The Ministry would like to assure that the identities of persons who come forward for testing and those who are found to be HIV positive will be kept strictly confidential.

The Ministry would also like to emphasise that AIDS is not transmitted through normal day to day contacts with a HIV infected person at home, in school or at the workplace. You cannot get AIDS from coughs, sneezes, shaking hands, hugging, sharing of food and cutlery, sharing of toilets, etc. The AIDS virus has to go directly into your bloodstream before it can infect you. ■

Table 4. HIV/AIDS Infected Singaporeans by Ethnic Group (1985 – October 2002).

Ethnic Group	Number	Percentage
Chinese	1501	84.0
Malay	134	7.5
Indian/Sikh/Pakistani	88	4.9
Others	65	3.6
Total	1788	100.0

Table 5. HIV Infected Singaporeans by Age and Sex (1985 – October 2002).

Age at Diagnosis	Male	Female	Total
<10	9 (0.6%)	8 (3.5%)	17 (1.0%)
10 - 19	9 (0.6%)	4 (1.8%)	13 (0.7%)
20 - 29	269 (17.2%)	90 (39.8%)	359 (20.1%)
30 - 39	600 (38.4%)	56 (24.8%)	656 (36.7%)
40 - 49	385 (24.6%)	34 (15.0%)	419 (23.4%)
50 - 59	159 (10.2%)	21 (9.3%)	180 (10.1%)
60 & Above	131 (8.4%)	13 (5.8%)	144 (8.1%)
Total	1562 (100.0%)	226 (100.0%)	1788 (100.0%)

Table 6. HIV/AIDS Infected Singaporeans by Occupation (1985 – October 2002).

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Service/Sales	348	19.5
Production Craftsmen/Assemblers	327	18.3
Cleaner/Labourers	215	12.0
Managerial	159	8.9
Technical	108	6.0
Clerical	93	5.2
Professional	63	3.5
Housewives	101	5.7
Others	148	8.3
Unemployed	226	12.6
Total	1788	100.0

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
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