

China Health Bibliography Update

Special Issue on HIV/AIDS

EASHD----China Rural Health AAA

****Contents in this special issue are extracted from various previous issues of **China Health Bibliography Update** (July 2004 to March 2005), and were mainly from the following databases: [PubMed](#), [Social Science Citation](#), and [Factiva](#)

Special interests:

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- [Dow Jones: HIV positive people increasing in China](#)
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- [China Daily: NGOs active in China's AIDS fight](#)
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- [Reuters: Many Chinese rural poor "ignorant" about AIDS](#)
- [Dow Jones: China appeal for help in fighting emerging AIDS epidemic](#)
- [China Daily: Students to assist in rural AIDS education](#)
- [Reuters: Fears and ignorance barriers to China's AIDS fight](#)
- [AFP: Health system in potential AIDS hotspot China struggles to treat patients](#)

Cohen, J. (2004). "HIV/AIDS in China. A new treatment campaign, but with limited weapons." Science **304**(5676): 1433.

Cohen, J. (2004). "HIV/AIDS in China. A scoop of international proportions." Science **304**(5676): 1439.

Cohen, J. (2004). "HIV/AIDS in China. An unsafe practice turned blood donors into victims." Science **304**(5676): 1438-9.

Cohen, J. (2004). "HIV/AIDS in China. Changing course to break the HIV-heroin connection." Science **304**(5676): 1434-5.

Cohen, J. (2004). "HIV/AIDS in China. Poised for takeoff?" Science **304**(5676): 1430-2.

Cohen, J. (2004). "HIV/AIDS in China. Vaccine development with a distinctly Chinese flavor." Science **304**(5676): 1437.

Crabb, C. (2004). "HIV/AIDS in China." Aids **18**(7): N3-4.

Full-text: <http://gateway.ut.ovid.com/gw2/ovidweb.cgi>

Park, A. (2003). "China's secret plague." Time **162**(24): 54-8, 60, 62.


Portsmouth, S., J. Stebbing, et al. (2003). "HIV and AIDS in the People's Republic of China: a collaborative review." Int J STD AIDS **14**(11): 757-61.

The number of individuals diagnosed with HIV in China has risen dramatically in the last two years coincident with increased awareness and an attitude change within government. UNAIDS has suggested that China could have 10 million HIV infected people by 2010. However, antiretroviral treatments and HIV testing are not yet widely available and infected individuals often live in remote areas. It is unlikely that cheaper, locally produced, generic antiretroviral formulations will be available in China in the near future. Consequently, alternative strategies to manage HIV infection are being considered including the use of hydroxyurea, chloroquine and traditional Chinese herbal medicines. It is recognized in China that prevention and educational strategies will need to be at the forefront of approaches to control this epidemic.


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UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in China and State Council AIDS Working Committee Office (2004). A Joint Assessment of HIV/AIDS Prevention, Treatment and Care in China. Beijing, <http://www.unchina.org/un aids/>.

Watts, J. (2003). "China faces up to HIV/AIDS epidemic. World AIDS day is marked by launch of huge public-awareness campaign." Lancet **362**(9400): 1983.

Full-text: 

Watts, J. (2004). "China's shift in HIV/AIDS policy marks turnaround on health. Pledge to provide free HIV tests shows China is starting to take action on combating the disease." Lancet **363**(9418): 1370-1.

Full-text: 

** Wu, Z., K. Rou, et al. (2004). "The HIV/AIDS epidemic in China: history, current strategies and future challenges." AIDS Educ Prev **16**(3 Suppl A): 7-17.

This article reviews the epidemic of HIV infection and AIDS, the Chinese national policy development in response to the epidemic, and disparities between policies and the need for AIDS prevention in China. The HIV epidemic in China has gone through three phases, and it is now at the rapid expansion phase. Since 1988, HIV/AIDS has been addressed from a legal perspective, but in the early stages laws and regulations actually hindered HIV control efforts. Since 1995 efforts have been made to improve policy decisions. Two major strategic plans were issued in 1998 and 2001, with increased government funding for implementation. Although the challenges facing HIV/AIDS control in China are many, the Chinese government is making a stronger commitment for implementing effective AIDS control measures in the country.

Ding, Y., R. Detels, et al. (2005). "HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases in female commercial sex workers in China." *J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr* **38**(3): 314-9.

A cross-sectional survey was conducted among female commercial sex workers (FSWs) in Zhengzhou, China, to estimate rates of HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and to document their sexual behavior patterns from October 2000 to January 2001. FSWs were recruited by the snowball sampling technique and were interviewed at their working environments anonymously. This strategy resulted in high rates of response (92%) and concordance (98%) to sensitive questions. A total of 621 FSWs were enrolled. One direct FSW and 1 indirect FSW were positive for antibodies to HIV in oral fluids (prevalence of HIV infection, 1.4% and 0.2%, respectively). A history of STDs was reported by 49% of the FSWs. Most FSWs (87%) reported inconsistent condom use. Ten percent of FSWs recognized their clients as drug users. A few FSWs (2.2%) were injecting drug users, of whom 2 reported incidents of sharing needles/syringes with other injecting drug users. Direct FSWs had more risk characteristics and were more vulnerable to HIV infection and STDs than indirect FSWs. Inconsistent use of condoms and a high level of STDs underscore the urgent need to implement intervention strategies and condom promotion, particularly among direct sex workers in China.

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Yang, Y. and K. L. Zhang (2004). "HIV/AIDS-related discrimination in Shanxi rural areas of China." *Biomed Environ Sci* **17**(4): 410-7.

OBJECTIVE: In order to explore the features of discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS in rural areas, a community-based intervention was carried out in two pilot communities of X County of Shanxi Province from September 2002 to October 2003. METHODS: Data were collected using qualitative methods (in-depth interview and focus group discussion) and anonymously structured questionnaires. RESULTS: (1) Severe discrimination against people infected with HIV/AIDS was revealed in the target communities. However, the response to HIV/AIDS was different in each community. (2) People were reluctant to disclose their HIV status or get tested for HIV, which endangered their sexual partners to contract HIV through unprotected sexual intercourses. (3) Attitudes towards people infected with HIV/AIDS varied. (4) Public education promoted a better understanding of HIV/AIDS which in turn improved community attitudes and behaviors towards people with HIV/AIDS. CONCLUSION: HIV/AIDS-related discrimination undermines both individuals' and communities' responses to HIV/AIDS and may be a serious obstacle towards effective HIV/AIDS prevention and control.

Yang, H. M., X. M. Li, et al. (2004). "Willingness to participate in HIV/STD prevention activities among Chinese rural-to-urban migrants." *Aids Education and Prevention* **16**(6): 557-570.

Data from 4,208 migrants aged 18-30 years old in Beijing and Nanjing, China, were analyzed to examine the correlates of willingness to participate (WTP) in HIV/STD prevention intervention activities among Chinese rural-to-urban migrants. Overall, 83.3% of the respondents would be willing to participate. Increased WTP was associated with employment in the industrial sector (OR = 1.59, 95% CI: 1.11-2.29), migrating to cities to learn more about the outside world (OR = 1.31, 95% CI: 1.08-1.59), prior experience with health maintenance (OR = 1.36, 95% CI: 1.11-1.66), higher level of HIV/AIDS awareness (OR = 1.16, 95% CI: 1.02-1.31), and perceived severity of risk behaviors (OR = 1.32, 95% CI: 1.04-1.68). Decreased WTP was associated with increased involvement in health risk behaviors (OR = 0.50, 95% CI: 0.35-0.73), increased perceptions of peer risk involvement (OR = 0.81, 95% CI: 0.68-0.98), perceived intrinsic rewards for risk behaviors (OR = 0.81, 95% CI: 0.68-0.96) and perceptions of HIV-related stigma (OR = 0.68, 95% CI: 0.53-0.89). The high level of WTP suggests that HIV/STD prevention activities are acceptable among rural-to-urban migrants. Their awareness of HIV/AIDS should be increased and HIV-related stigma should be reduced to increase the level of WTP. Recruitment and retention of individuals with high-risk behavior in prevention activities will be critical and challenging.

Li, X., X. Fang, et al. (2004). "HIV/STD risk behaviors and perceptions among rural-to-urban migrants in China." *AIDS Educ Prev* **16**(6): 538-56.

Data from 2,153 sexually active rural-to-urban migrants in China were analyzed to examine the relationship between the movement of rural-to-urban migration and increased HIV/STD (sexually transmitted disease) risk and the applicability of constructs of a Western-based theory of behavioral change to the study population. Measurements included migrant mobility, sexual risk, and the seven constructs of the protection motivation theory (PMT). Data in the current study suggest that high mobility among rural-to-urban migrants was associated with increased sexual risk. The PMT constructs are applicable in identifying perceptions and attitudes associated with sexual risk behaviors in this culturally distinct population. Increased sexual risk was associated with increased perceptions of extrinsic rewards, intrinsic rewards, and response cost. Also consistent with PMT, increased sexual risk was associated with perceptions of decreased severity, vulnerability, response efficacy, and self-efficacy. After controlling for a number of key confounding factors, all seven PMT constructs were associated with sexual risk in the manner posited by the theory. The association between mobility and sexual risk underscores the importance of effective HIV/STD prevention efforts among this vulnerable population. The social cognitive theories including the PMT may form a logical base for prevention intervention programs targeting rural-to-urban migrants in China.

** Li, X. M., C. D. Lin, et al. (2004). "HIV/AIDS knowledge and the implications for health promotion programs among Chinese college students: geographic, gender and age differences." *Health Promotion International* **19**(3): 345-356.

Data were collected in 2000 from 1081 students from eight colleges in China to assess the overall level of AIDS knowledge, and to explore regional, gender and grade differences in AIDS knowledge. The data indicate an inconsistent level of AIDS knowledge among students, with a significant gender and grade difference. More than one-third of the students perceived themselves as having limited knowledge of AIDS. While the students could identify transmission modes, they were less knowledgeable about symptoms, activities that did not transmit the virus, treatment and preventive measures. The majority of the students reported having discussed AIDS issues with their peers and friends, but few of them had done so with their parents or teachers. AIDS knowledge varied among students by site of residence, with the highest knowledge among students from the urban areas and the lowest among those from rural areas. The data underscore the urgent need for HIV/AIDS-related health promotion and prevention efforts targeting college students as well as younger age groups in China.

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China shuts down blood dealers to curb AIDS spread.

LBA0000020050325e13p003xp

355 Words

25 March 2005

05:26 GMT

Reuters News

English

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BEIJING, March 25 (Reuters) - China's health ministry has closed 147 illegal blood collection agencies and arrested dozens of people since last May to prevent the spread of the virus that causes AIDS, the Xinhua news agency said.

The central government had told local authorities to check blood collection and supply agencies more thoroughly to prevent illegal operations from resurfacing, it reported overnight.

China had hundreds of blood collection and supply agencies, Xinhua said, without specifying how

many were illegal under a law passed in August 2004 banning the buying and selling of blood.

Blood stations in China are required to test for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

But tens of thousands were infected with HIV in central China in the 1990s through local blood sales schemes that involved state-run health clinics, indicating a failure to properly screen donors.

The ministry had set up a national task force to ensure a secure blood supply; Deputy Health Minister Ma Xiaowei was quoted as saying on Thursday.

"Thirty people were arrested and 15 others were jailed," Ma said, adding that another 86 blood collection agencies and more than 100 people had been punished in the crackdown.

China has been criticised for being slow to recognise its growing AIDS problem. The United Nations has said the country could have as many as 10 million cases in 2010 if the epidemic is not taken seriously.

At least 25,000 people, and perhaps as many as one million, in the central province of Henan were infected with HIV in the 1990s in blood-selling scandals that were initially covered up.

Villagers were paid to give blood that was pooled and the plasma extracted for hospitals. The remainder of the blood was then returned to donors, to avoid anaemia, meaning that one infected donor could pass the AIDS virus to the others.

China, which recently has been raising the public profile of its fight against AIDS, says it has 840,000 HIV/AIDS cases. Experts believe the figure is more likely to be between one million and 1.5 million.

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HEALTH: CHINA BEGINS WAKING UP TO THE SPECTER OF HIV/AIDS

IPRS000020050324e13o00005

By Antoaneta Bezlova

983 Words

24 March 2005

Inter Press Service

English

(c) 2005 Global Information Network

BEIJING, Mar. 24, 2005 (IPS/GIN) -- After neglecting the danger of an HIV/AIDS pandemic for years, local authorities in several seriously affected regions in China have unveiled aggressive prevention and control measures that are stirring debates about individual rights here.

In recent months "green harbors", or purposely built homes for HIV/AIDS patients, have been set up in several provinces, giving rise to the possibility that affected patients are being sent there without their consent. Critics have dubbed the homes 'quarantine wards' and warned that isolating AIDS sufferers could lead to society shunning them.

Two of the most seriously affected areas - Henan province in central China and Yunnan in the southwest, have also introduced mandatory HIV tests for people working in the public entertainment and service industries. According to the new rules, anyone who wants to work in beauty parlors, massage centres, bath houses and discos must undergo HIV/AIDS and venereal

disease tests before taking up their posts.

But opposing voices have been raised in response to this new policy because it ultimately discriminates against HIV carriers. Those who test positive for HIV or for venereal diseases would be denied a certificate of good health, without which they cannot legally work in the hospitality or service industries, according to a report by the state news agency 'Xinhua'.

"Apart from the job loss, the problem here is that you cannot guarantee the confidentiality of HIV tests. If the patient's privacy is not protected you cannot guarantee that these people are going to come forward and receive treatment," said Prof. Jin Wei at the Central Communist Party School.

Jin Wei, who teaches city and provincial party leaders at the school about AIDS, said there exists a wide divide in attitudes towards HIV/AIDS in the country. In many provinces where the disease has had little visible impact, party leaders remain aloof to the problem and work on prevention is minimal.

In other areas like Henan and Yunnan where the HIV epidemic has caused deaths and made children into orphans - at the same time exhausting public health funds - the attitude is different. Here, Chinese leaders seem over-zealous in repairing their domains' damaged images and are going all out to stem economic losses.

Henan province has China's largest population of registered AIDS sufferers 26,000 according to official figures. AIDS activists however, say that up to one million Henan peasants have been infected with the disease after selling their blood at government-run health stations.

In the early 1990s local officials in Henan promoted blood sales as an easy way to eradicate poverty. Unscrupulous health workers bought blood from poor farmers, pooled it so they could extract the valuable plasma, and then injected what was left back into donors.

That made it possible for one HIV carrier to infect dozens of people. AIDS sufferers allege officials covered up the practice in return for a cut of the profits.

The pattern of negligence and corruption mirrors that in other parts of the country, where local governments have long ignored AIDS victims, considering them as an embarrassment.

Since 2002, attitudes toward HIV/AIDS at the top of Chinese leadership have changed. Chinese leaders have publicly admitted they have a growing domestic emergency on their hands and are committed to fighting it. In 2002 premier Wen Jiabao was the first Chinese top leader to be photographed shaking hands with an AIDS sufferer.

At the local level however, isolation and stigmatization of HIV carriers and AIDS sufferers remain the norm. Jin Wei, who has conducted a survey of communist party leaders across the country, said some 65 percent of them would resort to quarantine and isolation of their relatives if they had been found HIV positive.

"Discrimination against HIV/AIDS people is shocking even among the well-educated," she said.

Not surprisingly, when Linfen city in Shanxi province unveiled its "green harbor" for HIV/AIDS patients, online forums and editorials were abuzz with debates about its real purposes.

"Green harbors or quarantine wards?" asked an editorial in the Beijing-based Xinjing Bao. Noting that Linfen city spent 1.5 million yuan (180,000 U.S. dollars) on building the home, the paper

questioned the rationale for providing a long-term shelter for the patients.

"Is this a propaganda showcase? Is it an isolation colony? Or a real green harbor?" the editorial asked. "Our real concern is - are the AIDS patients free to come and go?"

Supporters of the project have responded by comparing the "green harbors" to clubs for AIDS sufferers. "It is a blessing not to have to face a white hospital wall but to be back in a natural environment," wrote Li Hui, an editor from Henan province in the newspaper '21st Century Business Herald'.

Health researchers believe the newly unveiled measures represent a shift in the government's policy of controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic, from voluntary counseling and testing to more compulsory measures. The shift indicates authorities are increasingly worried that the disease is spreading from high-risk groups such as intra-venous drug users to the general population.

China's Ministry of Health says they are only 840,000 HIV carriers, including 90,000 AIDS sufferers in the whole country. These numbers however, haven't been updated since 2003. Many independent observers also dispute the figure because very few of the suspected HIV carriers have come forward to register with the authorities.

A mere 12.7 percent of that conservative number of patients was registered with the health authorities, and disease control centres only had detailed records of 4.2 percent, according to 'Xinhua' news agency.

The United Nations estimates that as many as 1.5 million people in China have HIV, and that 10 million could get it in five years if the epidemic goes unchecked.

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China Province to Test Workers for AIDS

APRS000020050322e13m00461

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN

Associated Press Writer

451 Words

22 March 2005

17:24 GMT

Associated Press Newswires

English

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SHANGHAI, China (AP) - China's southwestern province of Yunnan will require annual AIDS tests for people working in hotels, nightclubs and other entertainment outlets, a local official and the government's Xinhua News Agency said Tuesday.

Under the new rules, announced Monday and effective immediately, those testing positive will be fired, Xinhua said, citing the text of the regulation.

But Wang Yinsheng, an official with the Yunnan AIDS Prevention Center, said health authorities wouldn't insist that those found to be infected be fired. They could instead be moved to jobs not involving contact with the public, he suggested.

The free tests are meant to identify people with HIV and AIDS in order to provide

them with treatment and curb the disease's spread, said Wang.

"Identifying this special group of people helps to reduce the chance of spreading and helps them to get timely treatment," Wang said.

Those who test positive for HIV/AIDS or for venereal diseases would be denied a certificate of good health, without which they cannot legally work in the hospitality or service industries, Xinhua said.

Employees of hotels, bath houses, beauty salons, night clubs and other entertainment venues are covered by the rules, which appeared to be an implicit official recognition of the role such facilities play in the country's thriving sex industry.

Bordering on Southeast Asia's drug-producing Golden Triangle, Yunnan has China's second largest population of registered AIDS sufferers -- 18,000 according to official figures. The province has taken some of the country's most aggressive measures, including promoting condom use and clean needles and setting up AIDS centers.

Most of the 1 million people infected with HIV/AIDS in China became so through intravenous drug use, although unsanitary blood-buying schemes mainly in the central province of Henan -- the worst affected area -- accounted for large numbers as well.

Henan has also mandated AIDS tests for people in service industries.

China for years hid its AIDS outbreak but has become increasingly open amid warnings the disease is spreading from high-risk groups to the general population.

The U.N. AIDS agency says the number of infected people in China could rise to 10 million by 2010 unless urgent action is taken.

Since last year, health officials have offered a free AIDS test to anyone who wants one and free treatment for the poor. Health officials are also now encouraging pregnant women to be tested.

Despite the new openness, infection still carries a heavy stigma. Few AIDS sufferers have gone public and entire villagers have been shunned after residents were found to have contracted the disease.

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China Urges Businesses to Stem AIDS

AWSJ000020050320e13l0000h

Asian-Pacific News

By Matt Pottinger

592 Words

21 March 2005

The Asian Wall Street Journal

A2

English

(c) 2005 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. To see the edition in which this article appeared, click here <http://awsj.com.hk/factiva-ns>

BEIJING -- The Chinese government is urging companies and nongovernmental organizations to play a larger role in halting the spread of AIDS, underscoring a heightened sense of urgency about a national epidemic that Beijing had until recently sought to play down.

Combating AIDS isn't just a government obligation, "but also the common responsibility of society as a whole, including business," Vice Premier Wu Yi said Friday in a speech to government and corporate representatives gathered for a summit on AIDS in Beijing.

China's vice minister of health, Wang Longde, used the one-day summit to encourage broader participation by nongovernmental organizations. "We've understood deeply that in HIV/AIDS prevention, there are certain things that the government is not able to do," the official Xinhua news agency quoted Mr. Wang as saying. "Drug addicts, sex workers and homosexuals are reluctant to talk to government workers. Therefore, we must encourage NGOs to participate."

Since she took control of China's health ministry in 2003 at the height of an epidemic of severe acute respiratory syndrome, Ms. Wu has presided over a notable shift in Beijing's AIDS policy. Following years of denial, the central government has taken steps to raise public awareness of the disease, including through televised visits with AIDS patients by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao. The government also has begun offering free antiretroviral drugs to patients in some impoverished areas.

According to Chinese official statistics, about 840,000 people in the country were living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2003. Experts inside China and abroad say the number of infected people is probably far higher. United Nations officials have said the epidemic could explode to 10 million cases by 2010 if the government doesn't take forceful action.

Ms. Wu's public effort to enlist the private sector's help is an indication that Beijing is more focused on halting the disease than governments in some neighboring countries, said Richard Holbrooke, a former U.S. ambassador to the U.N. and the president of the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, which co-sponsored the Beijing summit.

"India and Russia are still in denial," Mr. Holbrooke said. "But I have to say, on the basis of what I saw here, this government is no longer in denial."

Many activists and public-health experts have criticized Beijing's continuing reluctance to bring the same level of intensity to its anti-AIDS campaigning as it did to its belated, but highly effective, campaign to eradicate SARS in 2003. Many local officials continue to resist addressing the AIDS problem or allowing journalists to report about it. This is particularly common in locales where governments themselves are to blame for the spread of the disease, such as villages in central China where farmers and their families were infected through unsanitary, government-backed blood-buying drives.

Chinese officials at all levels remain skittish about promoting the use of condoms to prevent infections. China's sex industry is thriving, yet condom use languishes at 10% to 20% among prostitutes and their clients, according to Tim Brown, a senior fellow at the East-West Center, a Honolulu think tank.

Mr. Holbrooke said he agrees that stubborn local officials present a challenge to enacting central-government policy. "The mountains are high and the emperor is far away," he said, quoting a popular Chinese idiom. "But at least the emperor has declared his policy," he added.

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China plans national database of HIV/AIDS victims as epidemic looms

AFPR000020050320e13k003e9

PH

420 Words

20 March 2005

05:19 GMT

Agence France Presse

English

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BEIJING, March 20 (AFP) - China plans to set up a national database containing the records of its HIV/AIDS victims in a bid to get a better grip of the extent of the epidemic, state media said Sunday.

The Ministry of Health had vowed to establish the database, with entries for every reported HIV/AIDS patient, the Xinhua news agency reported.

"One question is that we are still blind about some vital aspects of HIV/AIDS control," said Wang Longde, vice-minister of health.

China officially has an estimated 840,000 HIV carriers -- a figure disputed by many independent observers -- and the government has precise knowledge of only a small percentage even of that conservative number of patients.

A mere 12.7 percent were registered with the health authorities, and disease control centers only had detailed records of 4.2 percent, according to Xinhua.

The draft of China's first HIV/AIDS prevention and control regulation had almost been completed and would be given to the State Council for further discussion this May, the agency said.

The regulation would mainly set out the rights and duties of regional governments and residents in controlling the deadly disease, according to Xinhua.

To identify more HIV/AIDS cases, every province would offer free, voluntary tests for the HIV virus this year, Wang said.

In a sign of future policies, southwestern Yunnan province, one of the most seriously

affected areas of the country, recently finished testing 410,000 high-risk people.

While China is groping in the dark as it tries to cope with its looming AIDS disaster, it is also hampered by a lack of resources.

Hao Yang, vice-director of the health ministry's Disease Control Department, told Xinhua there were only about 200 professional health workers engaged in HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention at the moment.

Many doctors who are employed in this field have not been well trained in taking care of HIV/AIDS patients, he said.

The United Nations has predicted 10 million cases in China in five years' time if the epidemic goes unchecked.

HIV/AIDS is already moving from high-risk groups to the general public in China, the coalition said.

The primary transmission route in China is through drug injection, but the proportion of sexually transmitted HIV infections and mother-to-child transmissions has rapidly increased in recent years.

Many others were infected through insanitary blood-buying schemes in the early 1990s.

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China's private sector joins war on Aids

STIMES0020050318e13j0001i

Asia - China

Chua Chin Hon , China Correspondent

512 Words

19 March 2005

Straits Times

English

(c) 2005 Singapore Press Holdings Limited

Nine companies offer resources and extended reach among consumers to raise awareness

BEIJING - NINE Chinese companies joined a global business coalition to help prevent the spread of HIV/Aids as corporate leaders and government officials met yesterday to discuss how the private sector can help fight the epidemic.

Speaking at the first such summit to bring together health experts, senior officials and corporate chieftains in China, experts said the companies can leverage on their core corporate strengths - be it infrastructure, reach or resources - to complement the government's national anti-Aids strategy.

For instance, said Mr Trevor Neilson, executive director of the Global Business Coalition (GBC) on HIV/Aids, companies like Sohu.com, which is often described as

China's answer to Yahoo, can reach millions of young Chinese and play a crucial role in educating them about the disease.

Of the nine Chinese companies, which include Sohu.com and market research firm Horizon, five joined in the last week and Mr Neilson expects five to 10 more to come on board soon.

'There is tremendous momentum,' he said. 'Many companies told us when we began work a year ago that they were just waiting for a clear sign from the central government to get involved.'

Yesterday's summit was co-hosted by the Chinese Health Ministry and attended by top officials such as Vice-Premier Wu Yi and vice-ministers of health Gao Qiang and Wang Longde.

Madam Wu told the conference: 'The Chinese government is duty-bound to stop the spread of Aids, but this is also a responsibility that must be shared by the business community and the society at large.'

China had 840,000 HIV/Aids patients at the end of 2003, according to official data, but it is believed that the actual figure is much higher.

While the government and the United Nations estimate that 0.07 per cent of the population is HIV-positive, the number of reported cases is increasing by 30 per cent each year.

Mr Richard Holbrooke, president of GBC and former US ambassador to the United Nations, believes that China is at the crossroads of its battle against the epidemic.

'They are either going to stop it and strangle it, or it's going to spread up to 1 per cent (of the population),' said Mr Holbrooke. 'And 1 per cent is 13 million people.'

He believes the 2003 Sars outbreak was instrumental in changing the mindset of the top leadership towards HIV/Aids by showing how health crises can have economic consequences.

In recent years, China has ploughed considerable funds into Aids-related research and treatment. Researchers have also begun trials of a new Aids vaccine on 49 volunteers in southern China, though details have so far been sketchy.

GBC hopes that multinational companies based in China would also join the coalition.

'Our position is that companies which are benefiting from the Chinese economic miracle have a responsibility to give back as well,' said Mr Neilson.

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China Testing AIDS Vaccine on Humans

APRS000020050314e13e000b0

233 Words

14 March 2005

14:47 GMT

Associated Press Newswires

English

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BEIJING (AP) - China has begun testing a new AIDS vaccine on a group of volunteers after they were given physical exams and signed waivers, the government said.

A total of 49 volunteers between the ages of 18 and 50 will be part of the three-stage tests, the official Xinhua News Agency said, citing Chen Jie, director of the disease control agency in southern China's Guangxi region.

The first stage of testing will last 14 months, Xinhua said. It didn't say what the stage was meant to test, but said the second would cover the "immune nature and safety of the vaccine."

Chinese drug regulators approved the tests last November.

At that time, state media said the vaccine, already tested on monkeys, was developed by Chinese scientists who have studied the genetics of the AIDS virus since 1996.

The agency didn't offer further details of the tests or the vaccine.

China says it has 840,000 people infected with the AIDS virus and 80,000 with the full-blown disease. Health experts say the true figures are much higher and warn that China could have 10 million people infected by 2010 unless it takes action.

After years of denying that the disease was a problem, China has become more open about its AIDS epidemic. But AIDS activists are still regularly detained and harassed.

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中国卫生部将在艾滋病患者中筛查结核病

XINCCN0020050329e13t003v0

372 Words

29 March 2005

新华社中文新闻 (简体)

Chinese (Simplified)

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新华社北京3月29日电（记者周婷玉）为掌握艾滋病病毒感染者和艾滋病病人中结核病患病情况及发病趋势，给结核病和艾滋病双重感染的肺结核病人及时提供适当的医疗救治服务，卫生部近日印发《在艾滋病病毒感染者和艾滋病病人中筛查结核病的方案（试行）》。方案中提到，在艾滋病病毒感染者和艾滋病病人合并结核菌感染者中，每年有10%的人发生结核病，有50%到80%的艾滋病病人最终因结核病而死亡。针对这一情况，方案要求，利用现有资料，对辖区已经登记的艾滋病病毒感染者和艾滋病病人进行结核病筛查；对正在进行或准备开展HIV筛查的地区和人群，要将结核病的筛查列入艾滋病的筛查工作中；同时，在日常工作中还要对发现的艾滋病病毒感染者和艾滋病病人进行结核病筛查。方案指出，检查的项目主要有：拍摄胸片1张、进行结核菌

素试验、对有咳嗽咳痰症状的患者进行痰结核菌检查，对筛查出的结核病病人要进行全程督导管理，规范治疗。

English summary: MOH to screen HIV/AIDS patients for TB

Beijing, March 29 2005 (Xinhua) – MOH recently released Tentative Method of Screening HIV/AIDS patients for TB. The document calls for local health authorities to screen registered HIV/AIDS patients in their jurisdictions for TB. Localities that are planning or undergoing HIV screen are to add TB to the screening process. In the meantime, TB screen are mandatory for all newly detected HIV/AIDS people.

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Clinton Signs Agreement With China To Provide AIDS Drugs

DJI0000020050223e12n00017

393 Words

23 February 2005

12:38 GMT

Dow Jones International News

English

(c) 2005 Dow Jones & Company, Inc.

BEIJING (AP)--Former U.S. President Bill Clinton signed an agreement Monday with China to provide a year's supply of AIDS drugs to 200 children to help Beijing battle the disease.

The program is part of a three-year, \$10 million deal struck last year between the Clinton Foundation and China's Health Ministry.

The Chinese government says an estimated 840,000 people have been infected with the AIDS virus in the nation. The U.N. AIDS agency says the number of infections could rise tenfold to 10 million by 2010 if urgent action is not taken.

"We have a real chance to keep this epidemic from spiraling out of control," Clinton said during the signing ceremony, held at the Health Ministry shortly after his arrival.

No details were released about the pediatric drug program.

Clinton said he has taken "personal pleasure" in helping China tackle the spread of AIDS and was impressed at the country's response.

"I hope China's actions will encourage other countries (suffering from AIDS) to do as much," he said.

Tens of thousands of people in central Henan province were infected in the 1990s because of an unsanitary blood-buying industry. In some villages nearly every family has a member with the virus, giving parts of the province some of the world's highest rates of AIDS infection.

Beijing has become increasingly open about its AIDS epidemic after years of denial, promising to provide free testing and counseling for those who seek it and free anti-retroviral treatment for the poor.

During the Lunar New Year this month, Premier Wen Jiabao visited AIDS patients and called for better prevention measures. The move not only showed the government's efforts to reduce the

stigma of the disease, but also highlighted its concern about controlling its spread.

Since leaving office, Clinton has been using his celebrity status to get HIV therapies to needy countries through his Little Rock, Arkansas-based foundation.

He has brokered deals with several major pharmaceutical companies to supply AIDS drugs at discounted prices to the Third World and has sent policy experts to help countries fight the disease.

He has also channeled hundreds of millions in private donations and contributions from governments to countries, especially in Africa, where AIDS is rampant. [23-02-05 1238GMT]

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Chinese premier spends news year holiday visiting AIDS patients

APRS000020050209e12900avq

By ALEXA OLESEN

Associated Press Writer

404 Words

09 February 2005

13:13 GMT

Associated Press Newswires

English

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BEIJING (AP) - China's premier spent Wednesday's Lunar New Year holiday visiting AIDS patients and calling for better prevention measures for the virus that the United Nations warns could infect up to 10 million Chinese by 2010.

Chinese state television on Wednesday showed Wen Jiabao shaking hands with an AIDS patient lying in a hospital bed, visiting a family who had lost both a mother and father to the disease and eating pork dumplings with AIDS orphans.

In November, President Hu Jintao was for the first time photographed shaking hands with an AIDS patient in a Beijing hospital -- part of a government campaign to show it cares.

In recent years, the Chinese government has launched efforts to control the virus after years of denying it was a problem.

Wen was shown by CCTV meeting with 10 virus patients in Henan province and listening to their stories. A pig farmer named Nie Zhan was quoted as saying that her health had improved with treatment and that she was able to return to work, last year earning \$1,210.

"You have been hurt by AIDS and have suffered the worst agonies, difficulties and loneliness," Wen was quoted as saying to the group. "But the government and the party care about you."

CCTV said Wen spent three days touring Henan province, parts of which have the world's highest rates of infection after an unsanitary blood-buying industry in the 1990s spread the virus among donors.

Wen also visited the home of peasant Gao Baoliang, whose son and daughter-in-law died of AIDS, leaving the elderly couple to take care of a surviving grandson. He called on local officials

to take extra care of such hardship cases, CCTV said.

He was also shown eating dumplings -- a traditional Lunar New Year meal -- with AIDS orphans and watching a song and dance performance put on by them. Wednesday marked the first day of the Lunar New Year, the Year of the Rooster.

Wen later attended a government meeting on stepping up measures to prevent the spread of AIDS, CCTV said, but details were not given.

The United Nations AIDS agency says the number of infected people in China could rise tenfold to 10 million by 2010, from an estimated 840,000 HIV-infected people today, if no urgent action is taken.

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China to eliminate clinical use of non-donated blood in 3 years

XNHA000020050207e12700003

246 Words

07 February 2005

Xinhua's China Economic Information Service

English

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BEIJING, February 7 (CEIS) -- China will eliminate the use of non- donation blood in hospitals within three years, China's Ministry of Health announced at a press conference here on February 6.

Wang Yu, deputy director of the ministry's medical policy, said blood donation would replace blood bought from people and would account for 100 percent of clinical blood usage by 2008.

Before 1998, most of the blood used in Chinese hospitals was bought instead of donated. This led to rampant blood sales and ensuing infectious diseases.

The country's official number of HIV cases reached 840,000 in 2004, most of which were caused by illegal blood transactions in the 1990s.

The Chinese government has encouraged volunteer blood donation since enacting a law in 1998 designed to curb soaring blood-borne infectious diseases.

In the past six years the percentage of donated blood used in medical work has increased from 5.47 percent in 1998 to 71.5 percent in 2004.

Problems remain, however, as not every province implements the policy seriously.

Shanghai, Tianjin, Beijing, and Tibet are the worst offenders, with their respective donated blood percentages much lower than the national average.

"Blood sales are still common in those regions," Wang said.

The ministry will release new rankings every six months, Wang said, in the hope that public opinion will put pressure on those areas that continue to violate the rule. (?)

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Surge in number of women catching HIV

FT

Vivien Cui

424 Words

02 December 2004

South China Morning Post

4

English

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The number of HIV cases among women is surging on the mainland, rapidly outpacing the growth of the disease among men.

In 1998, there were more than five male HIV sufferers for every woman who tested positive. But by September, men and women were afflicted in almost equal numbers, according to a joint report by the central government and a group of United Nations agencies.

A separate report released yesterday by the All-China Women's Federation said there were eight times more men found with the disease than women when the epidemic was in its earliest stages on the mainland.

Xinhua reported that the joint report concluded the rise in prevalence among women reflected better detection methods.

But Aids specialists warned that the rise in prevalence among women showed the disease was no longer confined to mostly male high-risk groups.

"These [high-risk] groups included drug users, three-quarters of whom are male, people who hire prostitutes and young gay men," said Jing Jun, an Aids expert from Tsinghua University.

He pinned most of the blame for the increase in HIV prevalence among women on men passing the disease on to their partners.

"This is to say heterosexual intercourse has become one of the major ways of contracting Aids," Professor Jing said.

While no statistics are available to indicate the ages of women most affected by the disease, Professor Jing said sexually active married women aged between 20 and 40 were the most likely victims.

Studies have found that many women in rural provinces contract sexually transmitted diseases from husbands who have sex with prostitutes while working away from home in urban areas.

Speaking at the launch of a public campaign to promote Aids awareness among women, Health Vice-Minister Wang Longde acknowledged that Chinese women were facing an increased threat from the disease.

"They need more care and more help, and they need to acquire knowledge and skills about Aids prevention and control," Mr Wang said.

"Despite the general low prevalence of the disease nationwide, Aids is beginning to spread from

high-risk groups to the rest of the population."

The joint report maintains that HIV carriers comprise 0.07 per cent of the population, a figure disputed by many academics and activists.

The All-China Women's Federation's report also predicted a rise in mother-to-baby infections.

The joint report said in some areas of the mainland, 5 per cent of pregnant women had tested positive for HIV.

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HIV CASES RISING; REAL FIGURES UNKNOWN

By Zhang Feng

700 Words

01 December 2004

China Daily

English

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More than 20,000 new HIV positive cases have been officially reported in China since 2002, but estimates of a far greater number of still unknown carriers present a huge challenge in quelling the epidemic.

The number of officially reported HIV positive cases in China has now climbed to 89,067 including 20,786 AIDS patients, according to a Ministry of Health report released yesterday in Beijing.

The new numbers, which are through September of this year, may vastly understate the extent of China's AIDS and HIV problem, however. Both China and the United Nations estimated last year that as many as 840,000 HIV carriers exist in the country.

That figure is based on estimates that .07 per cent of the population is likely infected, with the disease spreading rapidly. Yet the true extent of the problem is still unknown.

A major reason for the sharp increase in reported cases since 2002 is enhanced HIV screening among commercial blood and plasma donors in Central China's Henan Province and among intravenous drug abusers in Yunnan Province, Southwest China.

Henan finished a review this year among 280,000 commercial blood donors from the early 1990s, and 25,000 HIV carriers and AIDS sufferers were discovered.

Since the increase only refers to the reported infections from the 1990s, it cannot be a basis upon which to judge the ongoing expansion of the epidemic in the country, said Qi Xiaoqiu, director of the Disease Control Department of the Ministry of Health.

The exact expansion rate of the deadly disease is still unknown, he told China Daily when the report was released, but experts say the expansion rate is likely more than 30 per cent annually.

The assessment was completed by a special working committee on HIV/AIDS control under the State Council and the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS.

The ministry says that it does not know how many of the individuals who are registered HIV

positive cases are still alive.

The ministry and related departments have been working to strengthen various control measures, such as offering free treatment, and fighting against sources of infection, including illicit drugs and illegal blood collections.

There is great urgency, since the epidemic is spreading quickly in the country, Wang Longde, vice-minister of health, said.

There is lots of evidence showing the virus is spreading from high-risk people to common residents, especially through unsafe sex. More and more women are suffering from infection through that means.

According to Ministry of Health surveillance, the prevalence of HIV among intravenous drug abusers is from 5 to 8 per cent. In the Ili area of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the rate has reached to 89 per cent, the report says.

Up to September 2004, except for the Tibet Autonomous Region, all provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions on the Chinese mainland were found to have people infected with the virus through commercial blood donations.

Yet, alarmingly, the reports show that only about 10 per cent HIV/AIDS sufferers have been registered in China.

Where are they?

"The reality is that we still do not know where the 90 per cent are, which bring us great difficulty in controlling the disease," said Hao Yang, vice-director of the ministry's Disease Control Department.

Up to now, there has not been a nationwide survey on HIV infections, but only in special groups of people.

Another problem is that people hesitate to take HIV tests, even though they are free in many places, Hao noted.

Meanwhile, an effective and nationwide surveillance and reporting network in China is still under construction.

More than 1,000 surveillance spots have been set up in the country in the past year.

China has built 34 clinics and 50 spots to provide Methadone and clean syringes for drug users.

More than 10,000 AIDS patients have been given free anti-retroviral therapy, a kind of anti-virus treatment, this year.

The total central government investment on HIV/AIDS amounted to about 390 million yuan (US\$47 million) in 2003.

The budget for 2004 was 810 million yuan (US\$98 million).

(Copyright 2001 by China Daily)

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Head of Global Fund for AIDS says disease 'growing rapidly' in China

By STEPHANIE HOO

Associated Press Writer

395 Words

07 December 2004

07:08 GMT

Associated Press Newswires

English

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BEIJING (AP) - The head of a global AIDS group warned Tuesday that the disease is spreading rapidly in China, disputing government figures that suggest the infection rate has remained the same since last year but praising Beijing's newly aggressive efforts to fight the illness.

China has said for more than a year that 840,000 people in the country are HIV-positive and 80,000 have developed AIDS. Those figures haven't changed even as a chorus of international AIDS experts has said the true numbers could be far higher.

"The official figures must be wrong," said Richard Feachem, executive director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

After years of denying that AIDS was a problem, China has launched efforts over the past 18 months that include promises of free testing and treatment for the poor and public education campaigns.

"I have been very pleased to learn about the rapid scaling-up of the response to HIV-AIDS in China which has been occurring over the past two years," Feachem said at a news conference.

Despite its disease-fighting efforts, the communist government still harasses activists who agitate for better measures and state media are allowed to report only statistics that the government has already acknowledged.

The United Nations has warned that 10 million people could be infected in China by 2010 without better prevention.

Feachem, who was in Beijing to meet with health officials, said, "the HIV-AIDS epidemic in China is growing rapidly."

"There can be no chance at all that the HIV-AIDS epidemic is remaining the same," he said. "That is absolutely not possible."

Chinese Vice Health Minister Huang Jiefu defended the government's figures, saying they were based on a "randomized sampling method" conducted in 2003.

"We cannot say we will conduct this survey every year," Huang said at the news conference. He said the health ministry doesn't have enough staff.

The Global Fund is spending US\$270 million (euro202 million) in China over five years to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

China is committed to match at least 20 percent of that spending, Huang said. He said that in addition, it will give the fund US\$10 million (euro7.5 million) over five years.

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Number Of People With AIDS Virus Rising In China -Report

494 words

30 November 2004

06:16

Dow Jones International News

English

(c) 2004 Dow Jones & Company, Inc.

BEIJING (AP)--The number of people contracting the AIDS virus in **China** is rising and infections are spreading from high-risk groups such as drug users to the general population, according to a study released Tuesday.

The report by a U.N. agency and the Chinese Cabinet's AIDS commission called for stepped up measures to gather information on the spread of the virus in **China** and more prevention efforts.

China says an estimated 840,000 of its people have HIV while 84,000 have full-blown AIDS, spread mostly through prostitution and intravenous drug use. The U.N. AIDS agency says the number of infected people in **China** could rise to 10 million by 2010 without more urgent action.

"The transmission of HIV is still on the rise," said Dr. Christian Voumard, the chairman of the U.N. Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, the cosponsor of the report.

The report added: "The HIV case reports indicate that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is spreading into the general population."

As evidence of that, Voumard cited a higher number of women contracting the virus and a larger proportion of transmissions through sex.

Large numbers of cases have been found in the provinces of Yunnan in the southwest and Henan in central **China**, as well as in the northwestern desert region of Xinjiang, according to the report.

It said that might be due in part to more screening of commercial blood and plasma donors, as well as intravenous drug-users.

"That is a call for stepping up prevention measures," Voumard said.

Some parts of Henan have the world's highest rates of infection after an unsanitary blood-buying industry in the 1990s spread the virus among donors. Drug use is widespread in Yunnan, which borders heroin-producing areas of Southeast Asia.

The report didn't explain the increase in Xinjiang, but the mostly Muslim region was one of 10 areas targeted this year in a program aimed at stemming the spread of the virus. Voumard said **China** still lacks a nationwide system to gather information on infection rates.

The Chinese government has in recent years launched efforts to control the virus after years of denying it was a problem. But it still harasses activists who agitate for better measures.

In April, **health** officials began offering free AIDS tests to anyone who wants one and free treatment for the poor. **Health** officials are also now encouraging pregnant women to be tested.

In some parts of **China**, the report noted, as many as 5% of pregnant women are infected.

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China president shakes hands with AIDS patients, vows end to discrimination

594 words

30 November 2004

05:24

Agence France Presse

English

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BEIJING, Nov 30 (AFP) - Chinese President Hu Jintao Tuesday shook hands with AIDS patients and vowed an end to discrimination, signalling a new drive to confront an epidemic which experts warn needs urgent attention.

On the eve of World AIDS Day, Hu paid a visit to You'an Hospital in Beijing and urged Chinese people to end "discrimination and estrangement" towards those suffering from the disease, the Xinhua news agency reported.

His appearance was the first time he is known to have publicly met patients suffering from the condition since becoming president in March 2003.

Last December Premier Wen Jiabao made a similar gesture, also at a Beijing hospital. Xinhua said Hu, wearing a red silk ribbon, spoke "face-to-face" with 14 patients and encouraged them to "enhance confidence and courage to combat and overcome the disease".

"It is very unfortunate for you to contract the disease, but the (Communist) Party, the government and society will truly care about and help you," said Hu, who was accompanied by Wu Yi, vice-premier in charge of AIDS control and prevention.

China for years denied AIDS was an issue and only started seriously addressing the problem in the past two years.

Even so, ignorance about AIDS remains rife in **China**, with sufferers routinely facing widespread discrimination by local police, **health** authorities and the public.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic hit **China** later than many other countries, with the majority of sufferers contracting the disease through infected blood donations and sales and through intravenous drug use.

While **China** maintains it has an estimated 840,000 HIV/AIDS sufferers as of late 2003, international AIDS experts say the actual number is much higher.

Without strong government efforts to address the epidemic, the World **Health** Organisation has predicted that the numbers of Chinese infected with HIV/AIDS could grow to 10 million by 2010.

United Nations **health** officials warned this week that the disease was now rapidly spreading from high-risk groups to the general public.

Hu's visit coincided with the release Tuesday of a joint **China**/United Nations report setting out Beijing's policy on HIV/AIDS for the year ahead.

In it authorities vowed to intensify the fight against AIDS and to work harder on educating the public about the epidemic.

"It is necessary to reinforce the tracking of patients. Efforts are already being made in the worst-hit areas but they should also be reinforced in areas not as badly affected," Vice **Health** Minister Wang Longde said.

"One cannot say that the spread of AIDS has stopped. In the next three years we think we will be able, roughly speaking, to stop contamination by blood transfusions.

"For the remainder, we can only slow down the speed of contamination," he told reporters.

Wang announced a doubling of **China's** budget to fight HIV/AIDS. He said it had jumped to 810 million yuan (98 million dollars) this year from 390 million in 2003 and would increase further in 2005, without providing figures.

The report identified raising awareness, intensifying monitoring and strengthening treatment and care efforts as key areas to target in the year ahead.

Despite central government concern, Wang acknowledged that persuading local level officials to toe the line was proving difficult.

"Certain leaders at the local level know they have difficulties in their area but they do not want this known for fear that it will have a negative impact on investment," he said, and described it an "important problem."

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Chinese court awards damages for hospital-caused AIDS infection

863 words

29 November 2004

07:22

BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific

English

(c) 2004 The British Broadcasting Corporation. All Rights Reserved. No material may be reproduced except with the express permission of The British Broadcasting Corporation. Text of report by Chan Siu-sin entitled: "AIDS-case victor left begging for his payout" by Hong Kong newspaper South **China** Morning Post web site on 29 November

Wang Weijun is wringing his hands in anguish despite winning a landmark AIDS compensation case against a Hebei hospital.

He has received only 97,000 yuan of the 362,042.55 yuan in compensation his HIV-stricken daughter was awarded after a four-year legal battle ended in April.

Hebei Provincial High People's Court upheld a decision by Xingtai Intermediate People's Court that Kangtai Hospital in Shahe City should compensate Mr Wang and seven-year-old Wang Kaijia for its failure to ensure the blood it gave his wife and her mother, Jin Shuang-ying, was virus-free.

Jin died in May 1999, two years after receiving HIV-contaminated blood in a post-natal transfusion. Kaijia, who had been breastfed, was diagnosed HIV-positive a month after her mother died.

Mr Wang, 36, has used most of the 97,000 yuan to repay loans taken out to pay medical bills.

Whenever Kaijia becomes sick, he worries. Last month, when she was admitted to Beijing Ditan Hospital with chickenpox and fever, he was extremely anxious.

"After all, she is not a normal child. Originally, we planned to stay two to three days for a check-up and blood extraction, but we had to stay longer and spend more money," Mr Wang said. He ended up paying about 2,200 yuan for five days of treatment.

In an almost weekly ritual, Mr Wang takes Kaijia on the one-hour bus ride from the town of Yicheng to Xingtai Intermediate People's Court to chase the compensation, only to be told the person dealing with the matter cannot be found or the hospital - which has just built a three-storey building in its grounds - does not have money.

There is no legal time limit for the court to demand payment from the hospital, said Liu Xiuzhen, a lawyer helping Mr Wang.

"Many cases drag on without decisions being executed," Ms Liu said.

The court's enforcement office chief, Wang Jinzhong, said it sympathized with their plight and had tried its best to help.

He said the court was looking at getting Mr Wang the money by auctioning the privately run hospital's assets and facilities. However, it was waiting for clarification of whether the hospital fell into the welfare category as a welfare unit could not be auctioned.

"If we have a definite answer then we can reinforce our execution power and the money can reach [Mr Wang]," Wang Jinzhong said, adding that the court had frozen the hospital's assets so it could not change hands.

Even though Mr Wang is struggling, the success of his lawsuit has set a precedent for many HIV patients.

Following the Wang case, a Xingtai court ruled in July that a hospital should pay an HIV-positive couple 300,000 yuan in compensation. A month later, relatives of a dead AIDS patient sued Xingtai's People's Hospital and received about 36,000 yuan.

Mr Wang said AIDS was 30 per cent a natural disaster and 70 per cent a man-made disaster.

"If local governments, especially the **health** bureaus, conducted better supervision of blood sales and testing, these tragedies would not have happened," he said.

"The path I have taken is not without purpose. I have to use my experience to tell others how to use the law to protect themselves."

Late last month, three HIV-affected families from Henan Province visited Beijing in the hope of learning petitioning skills from Mr Wang and to petition central government departments because local courts refused to accept their cases.

Song Xiaoli, 38, mother of 11-year-old HIV-carrier An Jiao, from Zhumadian city's Ping-yu county, said going to court would be their last resort if further negotiations with their county hospital failed.

"Originally I planned to commit suicide with my husband, but he convinced me that **China** is a country of law and we should use the law to protect our rights," said Ms Song, who earns about 300 yuan a month but has taken out a 28,000 yuan loan to cover medical bills.

Since May she has been trying to file her case with Pingyu county people's court, but it has refused to accept it on the grounds of "a lack of proof, including the medical records" - kept in the hospital - and has told the family to wait while county leaders are reshuffled.

The lack of a national AIDS-prevention and treatment law means the enforcement of rules rests with local governments and courts, said lawyer Yang Shaogang, director of the Centre for HIV/AIDS Law Studies at Shanghai University's law school.

Even if courts accepted the cases, many had gone on for years without judgment, he said. "Some government officials reason that if one person is to be compensated, then how many more will have to be?" Mr Yang said.

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China AIDS cases rising by 40 percent a year: report

BOC

215 words

29 November 2004

03:04

Agence France Presse

English

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BEIJING, Nov 29 (AFP) - The number of HIV/AIDS cases in **China** is increasing at a rapid rate of 40 percent a year, a **health** ministry official was cited as saying by state media Monday.

The official, who was not named, said **China** had become the second worst-hit country in Asia and the 14th in the world, without providing figures, the **China** Times reported.

The **health** ministry told AFP that new data on the number of Chinese HIV/AIDS patients would be made public Tuesday, a day before World AIDS Day.

Until now **China** has maintained that it has an estimated 840,000 HIV/AIDS sufferers although international AIDS experts say the actual number is much higher.

China has admitted it does not know the real numbers. The United Nations predicts **China** could have 10 million cases by 2010 if action is not taken.

Since AIDS was first detected in **China** in 1985, an estimated 160,000 people have died. Many HIV/AIDS patients were infected by contaminated blood in government-run and illegal blood-selling operations in the 1980s and 1990s.

Intravenous drug use, prostitution and ignorance about the disease are also cited as big problems in its spread.

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China to conduct first nationwide survey on AIDS epidemic

379 words

14 October 2004

Agence France Presse

English

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BEIJING, Oct 14 (AFP) - **China** will conduct the first-ever nationwide survey to learn the extent of an AIDS epidemic from blood selling, demanding local governments find and test every person

who sold blood, officials said Thursday.

The Ministry of **Health** issued an order Wednesday requesting provinces and cities throughout **China** carry out a comprehensive search to "fully grasp" who sold blood and test them for the HIV virus.

"Not one person should be missed," said a notice posted on the ministry website. It added that the survey comes at a time when the country's AIDS situation is "critical".

"Those who became infected with the virus by selling blood around 1995 have entered the peak of symptoms and death," it said.

"A growing number of AIDS cases involving blood sellers have been exposed in some regions which were not previously regarded as being seriously affected. At the same time, there are still some areas where HIV-positive blood sellers remain undiscovered."

Detecting and treating the infected, many of whom were poor farmers desperate for income, was an "urgent task... without immediate anti-retroviral therapy, they will die in a short period of time," it said.

The ministry said in its notice that every local government must present a report by April 15, 2005 with a database on which residents in their jurisdiction have sold blood.

The blood sellers would then be tested for the HIV virus, the ministry said, adding that their privacy would be protected.

China says it has an estimated 840,000 HIV/AIDS patients, of which some 20 percent are believed to have been infected through unsanitary and often illegal blood buying schemes.

International activists say the real figure is probably much higher, with the United Nations and even government officials saying there could be 10 million cases by 2010 if the epidemic goes unchecked.

Independent **health** workers in the hardest hit province, Henan, said there could be one million people who sold blood and contracted HIV in that province alone.

The blood-selling schemes, carried out in many provinces, were endorsed by the government. Chinese leaders in the past year have finally begun seriously addressing the problem after initially ignoring it.

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Chinese law addresses AIDS for first time ever in legal amendments

277 words

28 August 2004

23:02

Agence France Presse

English

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BEIJING, Aug 29 (AFP) - China's lawmakers have addressed the AIDS threat directly for the first time ever in a sign the government hopes to curb the disease before it becomes an epidemic, state media said Sunday.

Amendments to the law on infectious diseases urge officials at all levels to step up the control of AIDS and take measures to prevent the spread of the disease, the Xinhua news agency reported.

They were signed by President Hu Jintao after being passed by the national legislature over the weekend, according to the agency.

The amendments also emphasize the need to help areas that are too poor to fund a healthcare system that effectively prevents diseases and treats people already infected, the agency reported.

"Lack of adequate funds has undermined contagious disease prevention and control capabilities of organizations entrusted with the tasks," Vice Minister of Health Gao Qiang was quoted as saying.

"Due to the lack of money, some patients could not receive timely, effective and formal treatment and became new sources of infection," he said, according to the agency.

The amended law also strengthens requirements imposed on blood donation centers following a series of scandals in recent years in which people were infected with HIV/AIDS after selling blood under highly unsanitary conditions.

The official number of HIV carriers in China is 840,000, a figure that has been left unchanged for nearly a year and has probably grown steeply since then.

State-run media have warned that unless China takes urgent action it could end up with 12 million HIV patients by 2010.

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NGOS ACTIVE IN CHINA'S FIGHT AGAINST AIDS

By Ma Guihua

1,060 words

20 July 2004

China Daily

English

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Never before has the international community seen such a diversified Chinese team at a world gathering for AIDS. But in Bangkok, Thailand, where the 15th International AIDS Conference was held from July 11 to 17, the 200 Chinese participants, including government officials, researchers, representatives of non-government organizations and non-profit agencies, volunteers and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA), were a noticed presence.

Chinese delegations to previous conferences on the pandemic "were composed of only two or three dozen officials and academicians," observed Song Pengfei, a 22-year-old PLWA from the China chapter of Positive Art Workshop, an NGO dedicated to using art to present and address AIDS/HIV issues in China and globally.

This time, however, Song himself met 20 HIV carriers from China, where an estimated 840,000 people are HIV positive. The young man, whose organization aims to express the voice and emotions of PLWA, became a media figure in November 2003 when former US President Bill Clinton shook hands with him at a symposium held at the prestigious Tsinghua University in Beijing.

Song went to the conference to present about 20 pieces of the art work done by fellow PLWAs from the workshop. "We want to get the voices of China's HIV-positive people heard," he said, adding that he is very much impressed by the exhibition from China. "Thanks to negotiations by the China STD & AIDS Foundation, one of the largest NGOs in the country, the display booths

of Chinese NGOs, which previously were scattered around the hall, were put together, creating a much stronger visual impact."

In the first few days after the conference started, Song kept busy attending to visitors from around the world and selling the artworks he had brought along. As all the paintings, T-shirts and postcards were in the hands of those who care for Chinese AIDS patients, he was able to concentrate on the treatment and medication sessions.

"I'm also keen on learning how foreign NGOs or NPOs operate, and will look for possible co-operation with the Chinese Government," he said, adding that his organization has so far trained about 100 PLWAs in China.

"PLWAs in China are under great psychological pressure. They worry about their work, treatment, financial problems and ways to keep a positive attitude towards themselves. Life is particularly difficult for those living in cities. Discrimination is still the biggest problem in China," he says.

Another activist at the Bangkok conference from China was Li Xiang, director of the Mangrove Support Group, a network organization created for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Li, also HIV positive, is glad to see more and more NGOs are active now in China. "The NGOs are good at delivering care to HIV-positive people. They have their own personal experience to share in peer education. They also have a complementary role to play in working with prostitutes and drug abusers, because they are closer to these people than government workers, who often feel awkward working with these people."

Mangrove Support Group, whose main purpose is to improve the quality of life for PLWAs through life-skill training and undertaking activities to publicize messages relating to HIV/AIDS prevention and control, has so far been involved in a number of beneficial events. Its programme has now reached Guangdong in the south, Sichuan in the southwest and Henan in Central China, where there are thousands of cases of HIV infection stemming from the operation of sub-standard blood collection stations in the early 1990s.

Voices of NGOs

Wang Longde, vice-minister of health and head of the Chinese delegation to the Bangkok conference, said that the government welcomes NGOs' involvement in China's battle with AIDS.

But Li Xiang notes that the complicated procedures for NGOs to get officially registered and acknowledged are still blocking the way.

"Without proper registration, NGOs' survival and financial support cannot be guaranteed," he said, adding that the voice of NGOs is still minimal. Even though the central government is trying to ensure free treatment and medication for certain groups, such treatment and medication might not reach the end receiver in some cases because of impediments in between.

Statistics indicate that in China, as 64 per cent of HIV cases are caused by injecting drug use, and infections through sexual transmission are slowly picking up to a two-digit rate, prostitutes and drug addicts are getting increasing attention from researchers and decision makers. In the meantime, however, male homosexuals, a group with high-risk behaviour have been somewhat neglected in the government intervention measures.

"Small NGOs like ours have the advantage of dealing face-to-face with HIV prevention day in and day out," says Guo Yaqi, executive director of the Beijing Gender Health Education Institute.

Chung To, an officer of the Hong Kong-based Chi Heng Foundation, which brought a 25-minute documentary film on orphans in Henan for screening during the conference, knows the great difficulty of working at the grassroots level. The foundation has helped 1,200 children orphaned by the death of their AIDS-infected patients to go back to school.

"Chi Heng was lucky to get accepted by the local government to work in Henan, because we've always maintained a low profile," says Chung.

The local government recently announced that it would build orphanages to provide a home for children whose lives have been disrupted by HIV/AIDS. Yet Chung fears living in orphanages may result in long term psychological damage to the children.

"It's better to put the children in foster families, where they can get parental love and care," Chung suggests.

His other concern is that meanwhile, "it takes multi-sectoral efforts from the health, public security and civil affairs authorities" to translate the good intentions and strong political will demonstrated by the central government into proper action.

Wan Yanhai, director of Beijing Aizhixing Institute of Health Education, which has been in the forefront in promoting the rights of PLWA in China, is very proud of the "revolutionary" role played by NGOs in drawing attention to corners largely unknown or neglected by society. In addition, he says, there should be transparency in government-led programmes to ensure those in need actually benefit from the programmes.

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Chinese firm offers AIDS insurance for children

170 words

19 July 2004

05:46

BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific

English

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Text of report in English by official Chinese news agency Xinhua (New China news agency)

Nanjing, 1 July: A Chinese insurance company has launched a new health insurance programme for children which covers severe diseases including AIDS contracted through blood transfusion.

"The new programme for the first time provides insurance for transfusion-incurred AIDS," a spokesperson for the Nanjing branch of China Taiping Life Insurance Co. Ltd. told Xinhua on Monday [19 July] in this capital city of east China's Jiangsu Province.

The new programme, named "Sunny Angel", covers 21 kinds of severe diseases and is available for children between 60 days and 17 years old.

In the past, children's health insurance programmes offered by Chinese insurers were mostly affiliated with the health insurance of their parents. The new programme can be joined independently, and the premium is refundable when the child reaches 25 years old, the spokesperson said.

Source: Xinhua news agency, Beijing, in English 0830 gmt 19 Jul 04
Document BBCAPP0020040719e07j00234

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Cheaper medicines expected for Chinese AIDS patients

310 words

16 July 2004

Xinhua's China Economic Information Service

English

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BEIJING, July 16 (CEIS) -- Chinese AIDS patients are expected to get much cheaper medicines following the signing of an agreement between China and US-based pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), the Beijing-based China Economic Times reported recently.

In last April, China's ministries of health and finance jointly issued a policy document pledging free treatment to poor AIDS patients in both urban and rural areas. Six anti-virus medicines including epivir, zidovudine and stavudine, all needed in the so-called "cocktail therapy" for AIDS patients, were picked as officially- designated medicines to be purchased by the government and distributed free. The Chinese government had negotiated for years with foreign companies holding the patent and sales right.

As a result, China started its home production of the anti-AIDS medicines last year, and currently there are several domestic pharmaceutical companies in Shanghai and northeast China manufacturing all of the government-endorsed medicines except epivir. According to the latest deal with the Chinese government, GSK will sell the epivir on the Chinese market at a "preferential price" for the period between 2004 and 2006, sources with GSK China Investment Co. Ltd. said. GSK is considering launching epivir production in China, which will help further reduce the cost and price, the sources added. Anti-virus medicines used to cost Chinese AIDS patients 30,000 to 50,000 yuan (around 36,00 to 6,000 US dollars) a year as the country had no capability to produce such medicines and had to rely on imports. Medical experts here are optimistic that the prices of medicines for AIDS, which have already dropped in recent months, will continue to fall. In the near future, they say, each AIDS patient might only have to pay 3,000 to 5,000 yuan (around 360 to 600 dollars) a year for treatment.

Document XNHA000020040716e07g000ta

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Many of China's rural poor "ignorant" about AIDS.

252 words

14 July 2004

23:29

Reuters News

English

(c) 2004 Reuters Limited

BEIJING, July 15 (Reuters) - A state newspaper criticised China's track record on stopping the spread of AIDS on Thursday, pointing out that lack of education meant many of the millions of rural poor were still in the dark about the disease.

China reported its first AIDS case in 1985 and currently claims 840,000 patients, though experts estimate the actual number is most likely between 1 million and 1.5 million. Health agencies predict that China could have as many as 10 million cases by 2010 without proper precautions.

"While the 15th International AIDS Conference is being held with great fanfare in Bangkok, many residents in China's rural areas still have no idea what AIDS really is," the English-language China Daily said.

"Until very recently, the government had largely adopted a passive posture to the burgeoning epidemic, failing to tackle the problem head-on in the early stages.

"The government's low-profile approach resulted in much of society being inadequately informed."

The bulk of HIV/AIDS infections in China are blamed on intravenous drug use and botched blood-selling schemes of the 1990s, which in some cases ravaged entire villages.

Testifying to increased government awareness, Premier Wen Jiabao met with widespread acclaim last December when he became the first top Chinese leader to shake hands with an AIDS patient.

Newspapers also published a signed article by Wen last weekend warning that AIDS was spreading to all levels of society.

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China Appeals For Help In Fighting Emerging AIDS Epidemic

220 words

13 July 2004

07:55

Dow Jones International News

English

(c) 2004 Dow Jones & Company, Inc.

BANGKOK (AP)--China appealed Tuesday for outside help in its fight against HIV, with one of its top health officials telling the International AIDS Conference that his country lacks the resources to properly deal with its emerging epidemic.

"At present China is still facing challenges and difficulties in the fight against AIDS," Wang Longde, the vice minister of health in China, said during a session on the role of Asian leaders in fighting the virus.

China lacks enough resources for prevention and control, and faces problems for traditional reasons and because of "discrimination against people living with AIDS," he said, without elaborating.

"We would like to strengthen our collaboration and cooperation with all countries and international organizations, and we welcome assistance and support from multilateral as well as bilateral organizations," he added.

China says it currently has 840,000 people infected with HIV - 80,000 of whom have full-blown AIDS. But the AIDS agency of the UN has warned that China could see 10 million HIV cases by 2010 if it doesn't act quickly.

China had long denied that it had an AIDS problem. But it has changed its stance recently, announcing measures such as the free, voluntary testing and free medication for the poor. [13-07-04 1255GMT]

Document DJI0000020040713e07d000kl

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STUDENTS TO ASSIST RURAL AIDS EDUCATION

By Zhang Feng

532 words

12 July 2004

China Daily

English

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More than 1,300 volunteers from China's medical universities will join a campaign to strengthen rural education on HIV/AIDS prevention.

During their summer vacation, the students will go to rural and remote areas, where nearly 80 per cent of the country's HIV/AIDS sufferers are.

The students are part of a campaign to teach villagers how to prevent the spread of the deadly HIV virus.

With technical help from United Nations institutions, including the World Health Organization, the Ministry of Health found about 840,000 HIV carriers in China, including 80,000 AIDS patients, mainly in rural areas.

Thousands of farmers were infected in the early 1990s due to a lack of awareness about the virus and laggard blood collection management. Many sold blood to illegal blood collection stations.

The latest education activity is part of a massive project initiated on Saturday by 12 government departments, ministries and organizations, to sharpen public awareness of AIDS, especially among rural residents, youths and women.

Volunteers will travel to 127 pilot zones, where the AIDS epidemic is particularly serious.

In these pilot areas, the government's policies including free anti-retroviral drugs and free counseling are being practiced, said Vice-Health Minister Wang Longde during a kick-off ceremony over the weekend.

Meanwhile, millions of AIDS prevention posters will be distributed to villages, urban communities, universities and high schools across the country.

Wang said the posters are different for each target group.

Those for rural and urban residents mainly focus on prevention and government policies while posters for university students include information on drug abuse as well as AIDS information.

The project also includes "face-to-face" education plans for women aged between 15 to 49 in the 51 counties.

Wen urges monitoring

In an article issued prior to the 15th International AIDS Conference which opened yesterday in Bangkok, Premier Wen Jiabao called on Chinese people to prevent and control the disease, saying AIDS is a major health and social issue facing the international community.

Wen's article was read by Wang Longde at the ceremony in Beijing on Saturday.

The premier said for China, this is a key moment in the fight against AIDS. The disease is spreading from high-risk groups to ordinary people in some areas, and the impact on social and economic development has begun to emerge.

"Governments at all levels and the whole society should attach great importance to AIDS prevention and control," he said.

In the revised Law on Infectious Diseases Prevention Control which is expected to take effect later this year, officials are asked to report and control HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. Or, they will be punished according to the law.

All AIDS prevention and control efforts should be made in accordance with the law while relying on science and technology, said the premier.

Wen called for effort to strengthen monitoring of the epidemic, as well as widely spreading information about HIV/AIDS.

Wen promised the Chinese Government would offer more help to HIV/AIDS victims, such as free medicines for poor sufferers, while protecting their rights and interests.

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Fear and ignorance barriers to China's AIDS fight.

By Tan Ee Lyn

701 words

6 July 2004

04:43

Reuters News

English

(c) 2004 Reuters Limited

HONG KONG, July 6 (Reuters) - China belatedly acknowledged the country's exploding HIV/AIDS problem when Premier Wen Jiabao shook hands with a victim in 2003, but there is still a long way to go before the deadly virus can be countered.

Arthur Pang, a doctor with humanitarian group Medecins Sans Frontieres and who treated AIDS patients in China's central Hubei province this year, said expensive drugs and stigma associated with the disease were still keeping sufferers from the treatment they needed.

"Wen Jiabao may have shaken hands with an AIDS patient, but it will take a long time to get the awareness down to the ground," Pang told Reuters in an interview.

Pang, who treated some 150 Chinese patients from December 2003 to June 2004 in an AIDS treatment clinic in Hubei's Xiangfan city, said Chinese doctors and nurses he worked with had little or no knowledge at all of the disease.

"At first they donned full gear, like the way they would with SARS patients," said Pang. "Many of them are very scared, they think they may be infected simply by touching."

"Once a patient is confirmed with the disease, they will send the person to an infectious disease hospital, they don't want to touch them. They don't want to deal with AIDS patients."

That attitude began to change at the Xiangfan clinic when staff observed the way Pang worked, and saw that such precautions were unnecessary.

STIGMA AND FEAR

But while attitudes among healthcare workers may be changing, ignorance and fear among the populace is a serious problem.

Those with disease symptoms who suspect they may be infected with the HIV virus do not seek help for fear of being stigmatised by their friends and family, or even sacked by their employers. There is also widespread ignorance that drugs can be used to treat the disease, said Pang.

He recalled a heart-wrenching case of a 29-year-old farmer who could not even stay to have his blood tested because he had to catch the last bus ride home.

The farmer contracted the disease selling blood. He tried to resist being hospitalised for fear nobody would take care of him after his family ran away. He died in hospital in May.

"Some are just too poor, they may even have to borrow money to get to the clinic some three to four hours away from their farms. Sixty or 70 percent of the people who sought treatment at our clinic already had full-blown AIDS," Pang said.

Although China has an estimated 1-1.5 million HIV/AIDS cases, it is ranked alongside India and Russia as countries most at risk from AIDS outside Africa. Health agencies say China could have 10 million victims by 2010 if it fails to take the threat seriously.

Activists hope the world's attention will focus on the epidemic again from next week when experts gather for an international meeting from July 11-16 in Bangkok, Thailand.

For years, China has faced international condemnation for disguising the scale of its AIDS epidemic, neglecting patients and arresting activists and journalists.

But last year, Wen became the first Chinese leader to shake hands with an AIDS patient and the government then sent health workers to the central province of Henan where many villages were hit by botched blood selling schemes in the 1990s.

Hubei is just south of Henan, where activists estimate that more than a million people are infected.

The disease spread there after clinics offered to pay farmers for blood. Plasma was extracted from the donor's blood and then the farmers were reinjected with blood from a pool of donors that was unwittingly infected with the HIV virus.

AIDS treatment is also very expensive in China. The cocktail of three anti-retroviral drugs needed are available only from pharmaceutical giants, which charge huge sums of money for them.

It takes, for example, US\$3,800 to treat a patient for a year in China, compared to just US\$250 to US\$280 in Thailand, where there are now lower cost, generic drugs available.

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Health system in potential AIDS hotspot China struggles to treat patients

CS

882 words

5 July 2004

20:14

Agence France Presse

English

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BEIJING, July 6 (AFP) - When farmer Cheng Guangshan went to his village clinic for treatment of two nagging symptoms of AIDS the doctor told him there was no medicine for his receding nails, and no needles for his anti-itch injections.

"A reporter who went with me couldn't believe it. He immediately went into town to buy the needles for me," said Cheng, 35, who was able to sleep that night, but has forsaken his nails. Cheng's experience is not unusual in China, where nearly 80 percent of HIV/AIDS patients live in the countryside.

The health care system there has long been neglected and underfunded. Now it is struggling to deal with one of the world's fastest spreading AIDS epidemics.

Finally acknowledging it has a serious HIV/AIDS problem after years of denial, the Chinese government is pushing ahead with a program to provide free drugs to farmers like Cheng who contracted the disease from selling blood, and eventually, to other poor AIDS sufferers.

But patients, doctors and NGO workers say there is a serious problem with China's lack of quality drugs, its inexperienced medical workers and poor infrastructure.

The government says so far it can only afford to provide four AIDS drugs -- ddI, d4T, AZT and nevirapine -- to patients, but they are older versions of antiretroviral medicine with expired patents. These are the only ones China is allowed to manufacture.

"The drugs used by China are found to be effective in treating only 50 to 60 percent of the patients when used in other countries," Wu Hao, a leading Chinese AIDS doctor, told AFP. "Hospitals in China are not as good as those overseas, so the effective rate here could be even lower."

Almost 20 percent of Chinese patients given the free drugs have stopped taking them due to the strong side-effects and the lack of qualified doctors to help keep them on the painful regimen, health officials said.

The program, begun last July, has reached only 7,000 people -- a fraction of the estimated hundreds of thousands infected, most of whom have not been tested and do not know they have the disease.

While providing AIDS drugs, the government is not supplying medicine for a host of AIDS related diseases, leaving poor patients suffering.

"I have patients who have symptomatic illnesses who cannot afford to pay (for medication)," said Yves Marchandy, head of Medecins Sans Frontieres' China office, which runs a treatment program.

The clinic in Cheng's village of Wenlou provides 81 types of medicine free of charge, but the drugs are not regularly stocked and medicine for many symptoms is not provided.

"Sometimes they don't have this drug. Sometimes they don't have that drug. Each day they're short on 10 to 20 different types of medicine, even basic supplies like needles," said Cheng, whose stubby fingers have practically no nails.

Medicine for receding nails is considered too expensive, so the government does not provide it. Doctors in rural clinics set up to treat HIV/AIDS patients also do little more than dispense medicine, patients complain.

"There are doctors, but the problem is their standards," acknowledged Wu, who is part of a government effort to train 85 percent of China's estimated six million medical workers by 2005 to provide AIDS care.

"Few doctors in rural China are trained to deal with infectious diseases. They are mostly general practitioners."

Health officials estimated China last year had no more than 100 doctors equipped to administer AIDS drugs and give follow-up care.

Even at Cheng's village clinic, which the government rebuilt as a showcase of its efforts to help the AIDS-infected farmers, the doctor had no clue what medicine to prescribe to Cheng to relieve the side effects of the AIDS drugs, which caused him to faint, vomit, and run a fever.

"The clinic is new, but the doctors haven't changed," said Cheng. "Last year, she was our nurse. This year, she's our doctor."

Only in April did the government send a doctor who seemed to know what he was doing, Cheng said.

"It's worse in other villages," said Hu Jia, a well-known Beijing-based activist who frequently travels to Henan province, where Wenlou and many villages hardest hit by the AIDS outbreak caused by blood selling is located.

"In other villages, a patient goes in to ask for something as simple as headache medicine, and the staff would bark 'No medicine!'"

Infrastructure is also lacking.

Few laboratories able to test HIV/AIDS exist in the countryside and most farmers have to travel as far as provincial capitals to get tested.

Countryside hospitals and clinics also are unequipped to test treated patients for CD4 white blood cells, an important way to measure whether the drugs are working.

The government is making efforts to improve care, including negotiating with pharmaceutical companies to reduce prices of better antiretroviral drugs, but some villagers are losing hope.

"The media has reported all the good work the government has done, but it doesn't reflect reality," one Wenlou villager said. "It's the same as before. The only difference is the clinic is larger."