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YOUNG PEOPLE WITH HIV TAKING BIG RISKS

GENEVA – Adolescents and young adults with HIV are at high risk of treatment failure and of transmitting the virus to their sexual partners, according to research published today in the international public health journal, the Bulletin of the World Health Organization.

The study, conducted in Haiti, showed that 12 months after beginning therapy, only 106 (73%) of 146 patients were still in medical care (the remainder having died or left therapy) and, of these, only 45% adhered well to life-prolonging antiretroviral treatment, 51% had virologic failure and 73% engaged in unsafe sex. Young people had twice the rate of virologic failure as older patients from the same clinic.

“Treatment adherence in young people is often aggravated by psychological and social issues including depression, sexual abuse and lack of family support,” says one of the study’s authors, Dr Daniel W. Fitzgerald, from Weill Cornell Medical College, New York, United States of America. “Strategies targeting their special needs are urgently needed. In Haiti, we have opened an adolescent HIV clinic providing medical and psycho-social care with support from UNICEF.”

More than half of all new HIV infections in the world now occur in adolescents and young adults, and are acquired predominantly through sexual contact. In sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, the regions of the world most severely affected by HIV infection, two-thirds of young people infected with HIV-1 are women.

Read the study here: http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/86/12/en/index.html

The Bulletin of the World Health Organization is an international journal of public health with a special focus on developing countries. It is one of the world’s leading public health journals and the flagship periodical of the World Health Organization.

This issue covers a spectrum of topics including:

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- Why has the Japanese population experienced a reduction in blood pressure?
- Interview with Dr Donald A Henderson, chief of WHO’s global smallpox eradication campaign
- Evolution of the barefoot doctors in China
- How Mozambique is stopping the “brain drain” of its scientists

The Bulletin's table of contents can be found at:
http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/86/12/en/index.html

For further information please contact:

Fiona Fleck, News Editor
Bulletin of the World Health Organization
Geneva, Switzerland
T: +41 22 791 1897
M: +41 78 678 9079
fleckf@who.int

Sarah Cumberland
Bulletin of the World Health Organization
Geneva, Switzerland
T: +41 22 791 32 64
M: +33 6 31 66 60 32
cumberlands@who.int

Dr Daniel W Fitzgerald
Cornell University
New York, United States of America
T: +1 212 746 1701
dfitzgerald@gheskio.org

Dr Bruce Dick,
Medical Officer, HIV and Young People
Department of Child and Adolescent Health and
Development
World Health Organization
Geneva, Switzerland
T: +41 22 79 13799
dickb@who.int


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