

AIDS

Student's Name

Institution

AIDS

Introduction

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is an illness caused by infections with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). The virus becomes attached to the immune system and makes the body prone to a number of diseases and cancers. The human immunodeficiency virus is passed through blood, vaginal fluids, breast milk and semen. AIDS appears at the later stages of the HIV infection.

History of HIV/AIDS

Kaposi's Sarcoma was an unusual type of comparatively benign cancer that used to occur in aged people. By March 1981, there occurred eight cases of a more destructive form of Kaposi's Sarcoma among the homosexual men in New York. Coincidentally, there was a rise in the amount of cases of an uncommon lung infection called *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia in the U.S. The rise of this disease in April 1981 was observed at the Centers for Disease Control (Kennedy, 2011). Later that year, in June, the Center for Disease Control published a report about the occurrence of *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia in five different men in Los Angeles, U.S.A. The report is at times referred to as the first record of AIDS.

AIDS is one of the major causes of death among young and middle-aged people in the U.S. About 47 million people have been contaminated with HIV since the beginning of the outbreak. The deadly disease starts with Human immunodeficiency virus infection, which destroys the immune system and makes it difficult for the body to protect itself against infections. HIV aims at the white blood cells also referred to as helper T cells or CD4 cells, damaging the body's capability of battling infections (NCBI, n.d.).

Ways of Transmission

Blood is one of the ways with the help of which AIDS may be transmitted. Thus, sharing needles when injecting drugs into the body and open cuts may be very dangerous.

Sexual contact is another way of transmission of the disease. In this case, transmission mainly occurs through anal and vaginal sex. However, oral sex may become another way of transmitting the disease. Anal sexual intercourse contributes to the highest percentage of HIV transmission.

AIDS may also be transmitted from a mother to a child. When bearing a child, a mother may transmit the virus to the fetus. After birth, a baby may also contract the virus during breastfeeding.

One more way of transmission of AIDS is organ donation. This happens when a recipient gets organs from an infected donor. Hospitals should screen the organ giver's blood scrupulously to trace the virus.

According to NCBI (n.d.), drug users who share needles for injection constitute the biggest part of HIV-infected people among substance users in the U.S. The HIV rates differ by geographic regions. NCBI (n.d.) also states that a study carried out in Kenya in the 1980's show that male circumcision reduces the rates of HIV among men.

Symptoms of HIV infection include, but not are limited to, acute diarrhea, headaches, oral thrush, fever, sweating during the night, sore throat accompanied by dry cough, rashes on the skin, swollen lymph glands and constant tiredness. If these symptoms continue for a significant period of time and are not managed well, they may develop into AIDS. This stage of

mild HIV infection continues for a few months to become an asymptomatic HIV infection, which can last for up to ten years. People with the virus produce less CD4 cells, and the virus propagates in their bodies (World Health Organization, n.d.). As a result, they easily catch illnesses that are called opportunistic infections. Common signs of opportunistic infections are fever, night sweats, general body weakness, weight loss and swollen lymph glands.

Some of the HIV linked illnesses include Tuberculosis, Cryptococcal meningitis, Kaposi's Sarcoma, herpes simplex infection, toxoplasmosis, cervical cancer and Candidiasis. Tuberculosis (TB) is probably the most common among them.

Pulmonary tuberculosis needs continuous medication for at least six months. If TB is not treated well, it grows into the resistant TB. The symptoms include fever, sweating, especially at night, dry coughs with production of sputum, and wasting (Pelleperg, 2013).

Kaposi's Sarcoma (KS) is a condition of the skin. Cryptococcal meningitis is a common infection in HIV cases. Nausea, headaches, anorexia, fever, dementia and reduction of the white blood cells are the known symptoms of Cryptococcal meningitis.

Herpes simplex infection is the disease that may affect skin, mouth, eyes or genitals. Symptoms of this infection are ulcers, blisters or itching of the affected areas. Toxoplasmosis has symptoms that include seizures, confused mental states, fever, paralysis and constant headaches.

Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia is another serious disease. Frequent pneumonia is a sign of the HIV/AIDS disease. It is characterized by fever, shortness of breath, dry cough and night sweats. It is one of the initial signs of HIV in untested people (Crabb, n.d.). System that regulates the body's capability to defend itself against the virus is called the immune system. Aged individuals have very weak immune systems and are at a higher risk of quick disease infection.

The presence of such HIV-linked infections in people as TB may expose them to quicker disease development. When HIV is transmitted to an uninfected individual who is not under anti-HIV medication, it replicates very quickly.

Prevention Measures Against HIV/AIDS

Indulging in risky sexual acts increases the risk of developing HIV/AIDS. People should practice abstinence and safer sexual acts, for example, with the help of condoms that reduce the chances of becoming infected with HIV. Encouraging monogamy and avoiding many sexual partners will also help since a big number of sexual partners and unprotected sex create a network that fuels the spread of the disease.

The possibility of transmitting the virus from a mother to the fetus can be reduced through treatment. Zidovudine or AZT is an example of such treatment. It is given orally to the mother every day from the fourteenth week of pregnancy until the day of delivery.

HIV/AIDS has been regarded as an epidemic that spreads through and affects countries and the whole world in general. In 2007, thirty-three million people lived with the disease all over the globe. It also took the lives of about two million adult individuals and 330,000 children. A big percentage of the deaths took place in Sub-Saharan Africa, where hunger and undernourishment contribute to the disease and mortality rate (Piot, 1998).

As suggested by HDC (human disease and conditions), HIV/AIDS contagion is an ordinary risk among the youth. It is thought that 110,000 young people in the United States have been identified with HIV/AIDS. It is also likely that a quarter of all infections linked with HIV and a part of all HIV infections are present in the youth in the U.S. (Human Diseases and Conditions, n.d.).

Apart from traditional medications, other different types of treatment of HIV/AIDS are acupuncture, increment in multivitamins and mineral, etc. These alternative methods of treatment improve the life of persons infected with the virus since they boost their immune system.

Conclusion

During the first period of AIDS emergence, people developed numerous misconceptions about the disease. Presently, the U.S. Constitution forbids the prejudice against people living with such infectious diseases as AIDS. In conclusion, it is important to know that HIV does not live outside the body cells. Therefore, one cannot contract the virus by shaking hands, hugging or touching an infected person.