HIV/AIDS is a serious health concern in Los Angeles County. African American women showed a higher level of concern about HIV/AIDS than African American men. Nearly one-quarter (24%) of adults in LA County (Table 1) thought that HIV/AIDS is a very serious health issue in their community. This is the highest percentage of adults who perceived HIV/AIDS to be very serious in the county over the past two decades.

In this study, HIV/AIDS was a serious health concern in the United States from 2007 to 2015. However, the rate of new HIV infections has decreased in recent years. In 2015, there were an estimated 42,000 new HIV infections in the United States, which is a 20% decrease from 2010.

The HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB) of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) administers grants to state, local, and tribal health departments, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and other partners to help prevent and control HIV/AIDS. The bureau has invested over $27 billion in HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment services since 1990.

Knowledge and Perceptions of HIV/AIDS in Los Angeles County

Introduction

HIV is a virus that infects the immune system and causes AIDS, a serious disease that weakens the body’s ability to fight off infections and can lead to death. In the United States, HIV/AIDS has affected people of all ages, races, and ethnicities.

Prevalence

In Los Angeles County, the number of people living with HIV/AIDS has increased over the past two decades. In 1990, there were an estimated 12,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in Los Angeles County. In 2020, the estimated number of people living with HIV/AIDS in Los Angeles County was 75,000.

Socioeconomic Status

The socioeconomic status of people living with HIV/AIDS varies greatly across Los Angeles County. For example, people living with HIV/AIDS who are insured by Medicaid or Medicare are more likely to have lower incomes than those with private insurance.

Education

People with higher levels of education are more likely to have lower rates of new HIV infections. In Los Angeles County, people with college degrees or higher have lower rates of new HIV infections than people with less education.

Race and Ethnicity

African American and Latino men have higher rates of new HIV infections than white men. However, African American and Latino men have lower rates of new HIV infections than white women.

Perceived Seriousness of HIV/AIDS in LA County (Table 1)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>Estimated #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>28.9 - 34.2</td>
<td>8,648,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>18.1 - 25.0</td>
<td>6,032,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 1: Perceived Seriousness of HIV/AIDS in LA County**

For more information, visit the Los Angeles County Health Department’s website: http://lapublichealth.org/aids
Results from the 2005 LACHS indicate that:

- 54% of all LA County adults (52% of females and 56% of males) did not know that medications taken during pregnancy and birth can reduce or prevent HIV transmission from mother to child.
- Of notable concern is the finding that nearly 50% of 16-44 year old women (i.e., women of childbearing age) were aware that medications can help prevent perinatal HIV transmission.
- Women with less than a high school education were more likely to be aware (63%) than individuals with postgraduate education (44%), and college/post graduate work (46%).
- Asian/Pacific Islander and whites were least aware that perinatal medications can reduce or prevent HIV transmission (60% and 57% unaware, respectively), while 51% of African American females and 46% of Latinos did not know such medications can help (Figure 3).  

- The 2005 LACHS found that:
  - Among females who had not been HIV tested in the past 12 months, nearly 60% (59%) said that HIV testing should be included as part of routine medical care.
  - Because of the rise in HIV/AIDS among women, nearly 60% of all LA County adults (52% of females and 63% of males) said it is important that females who are trying to get pregnant (or are already pregnant) be tested for HIV.

HIV testing should be a focus of local, state, and national initiatives.

The evidence found that:

- 83% of all LA County adults (regardless of gender) agreed that HIV testing should be included as part of routine medical care.
- Younger adults (18-44 year olds) were more inclined to support HIV testing as part of routine care (91%) than those with more education (high school: 89%, some college/trade school: 82%, college/post graduate degree: 77%).
- Nearly 50% of Latinos, 78% of whites, and 70% of Asians/Pacific Islanders would consider rapid HIV testing.

- Almost all adults at higher risk for HIV believed that HIV testing should be included as part of routine care (80% vs. 60%), compared to 84% of adults at lower risk.

- A greater percentage of recently HIV tested adults (>6 months) were more open to testing, compared to those not tested in the past 2 years (59%).

Demand for Rapid HIV Testing

Studies conducted in 2000 by the CDC found that among individuals in the U.S. who were tested for HIV, 77% would consider routine HIV testing, compared with 73% of whites and 71% of Asians/Pacific Islanders.

- The 2005 LACHS found that:
  - Among all adults who had not been tested for HIV, 77% said they would consider routine HIV testing, compared with 90% of whites, nearly one third (31%) of African Americans, and 71% of Asians/Pacific Islanders.
  - Nearly all adults (89%) were open to getting tested if results could be available within an hour.
  - Among all adults who had not been previously tested for HIV, 77% said they would consider rapid HIV testing.
  - More (95%) higher risk adults who had not been previously tested for HIV in the past 2 years would consider rapid HIV testing, compared with 73% of whites and 71% of Asians/Pacific Islanders.

The rise in HIV/AIDS in LA County is of notable concern. The LA County Health and Department of Health Services offer free HIV testing in public clinics, through organizations that specialize in HIV testing units, regardless of health insurance or immigration status.

For more information on the prevention of HIV transmission to others. The CDC now recommends voluntary HIV testing for all adults and sexually active adolescents as part of routine medical care and indicates that increased access to voluntary HIV testing would be a focus of local, state, and national initiatives.

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  - More (95%) higher risk adults who had not been previously tested for HIV in the past 2 years would consider rapid HIV testing, compared with 73% of whites and 71% of Asians/Pacific Islanders.
that HIV transmission to women more often occurs through injection drug use, and 24% did not know. 20% said that the most likely transmission is likely to acquire HIV/AIDS through having sex, women are more likely to have become infected a significant method of transmission. in LA County are most likely to acquire HIV/AIDS of women (67%) acquired the infection through and 11% of persons living with AIDS. Two-thirds perceived HIV/AIDS as a very serious issue, community.

Among females, nearly three-quarters of 18-44 year olds (58% vs. 41% unaware, respectively) believed that HIV testing should be included as part of routine care (87%) than were 45-64 year olds (81%) and 65 or over (79%). Younger adults (18-44 years old) were more inclined to believe HIV testing should be included as part of routine care (89%) than those with more education (high school: 83%, some college/trade school: 82%, college/post graduate degree: 77%). Near all (95%) African Americans were in support of routine HIV testing, compared to 89% of Latinos, 78% of whites, and 70% of Asians/Pacific Islanders. Almost all adults at higher risk for HIV believed that HIV testing should be included as part of routine care (86% vs. 67%, respectively) and for 80% of LA County adults (regardless of gender) knew that free HIV testing is available. Central to getting tested if results could be available within 40 minutes are available and have been shown to significantly reduce the number of people who actually receive their results. After implementing rapid HIV testing in LA County, the percent of positive test results dropped from 8% to 4% from LA County-funded HIV counseling and testing providers dropped to under 2% in 2005. The 2005 LACHS found that: 

80% of LA County adults (regardless of gender) knew about their risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS. Younger adults (18-44 years old) were more likely to consider rapid HIV testing (85%) compared to age and older adults (78% and 63%, respectively).

Increased access to voluntary HIV testing is critical in preventing HIV/AIDS because people who are aware that they are HIV positive can seek life-saving treatment and take steps to prevent transmission to others. The CDC now recommends voluntary HIV testing for all adults and sexually active adolescents as part of routine medical care and indicates that increased access to voluntary HIV testing should be a focus of local, state, and national initiatives. The changes found that: 83% of all LA County adults (regardless of gender) agreed that HIV testing should be included as part of routine care (87%) than were 45-64 year olds (81%) and individuals 65 or over (74%). Younger adults (18-44 year olds) were more inclined to support HIV testing as part of routine care (83%) than those with more education (high school: 83%, some college/trade school: 82%, college/post graduate degree: 77%). Near all (95%) African Americans were in support of routine HIV testing, compared to 89% of Latinos, 78% of whites, and 70% of Asians/Pacific Islanders. Almost all adults at higher risk for HIV believed that HIV testing should be included as part of routine care (86% vs. 67%, respectively) and for 80% of LA County adults (regardless of gender) knew that free HIV testing is available. Central to getting tested if results could be available within 40 minutes are available and have been shown to significantly reduce the number of people who actually receive their results. After implementing rapid HIV testing in LA County, the percent of positive test results dropped from 8% to 4% from LA County-funded HIV counseling and testing providers dropped to under 2% in 2005. The 2005 LACHS found that: 

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Consideration of rapid HIV testing was inversely related to educational level, with less educated adults showing greater interest (less than high school: 84%, high school: 81%, some college/trade school: 79%, college/post graduate degree: 77%). A greater percentage of African Americans (86%) and Latinos (88%) would consider rapid HIV testing, compared with 50% of whites and 71% of Asians/Pacific Islanders. Almost all adults (95%) knew that free HIV testing is available. Central to getting tested if results could be available within an hour. Among all adults who had not been previously tested 77% said they would consider rapid HIV testing. Most (99%) higher risk adults who had not been previously tested in the past 2 years said they would consider rapid HIV testing. Almost all adults (98%) would consider rapid HIV testing the highest interest in rapid HIV testing (96%).
HIV transmission to women are more likely to have become infected through heterosexual contact with a man, compared to 26% of women (67%) acquired the infection through infidelity. Women with less than a high school education were more likely to report that they can reduce or prevent HIV transmission, compared to females with a high school education (44%), some college/trade school (47%), and college/post graduate work (44%). Asian/Pacific Islander and white females were least aware that prenatal medications can reduce or prevent HIV transmission (60% and 57% unaware, respectively), while 51% of African American females and 46% of Latinas did not know such medications can help (Figure 3). When asked in the 2005 LACHS whether adults at higher risk for HIV transmission would consider rapid HIV testing, the percent of adults tested in the past 2 years for HIV said they would consider rapid HIV testing (85%) compared to 48% of LA County adults (regardless of gender). The 2005 LACHS found that: • 80% of LA County adults (regardless of gender) believed that HIV/AIDS is not at all serious in their community, compared to 46% of heterosexual males. • 10% were aware of free HIV testing (38%) compared to 46% of those not recently tested. • Younger adults (18-44 year olds) were more likely to support HIV testing as part of routine care (91%) than those with more education (high school: 88%, some college/trade school: 82%, college/post graduate degree: 77%). • A higher percentage (79%) of African American women were in support of routine HIV testing, compared to 49% of Latinos, 78% of whites, and 70% of Asian/Pacific Islanders. • Almost all adults at higher risk for HIV believed that HIV testing should be included as part of routine care for nearly all (88%), compared to 44% of adults at lower risk. • A greater percentage of recently tested women reported that HIV testing should be routine, compared to those not tested in the past 2 years (94% vs. 83%). • 84% of adults at lower risk for HIV said they would consider rapid HIV testing. Studies conducted in 2000 by the CDC found that among individuals in the U.S. who were tested and found to be HIV positive, nearly one-third (33%) never learned of their status because they were not aware of their infection. Since then, rates of voluntary HIV testing among adults have increased. According to results from the 2005 LACHS: • 84% of adults (regardless of gender) knew that free HIV testing is available. • Awareness of free HIV testing did not differ by level of education. • A higher percentage (91%) of Latinos were aware that free HIV testing is available, compared with 83% of whites, 78% of African Americans, and 68% of Asian/Pacific Islanders. • There was no difference in awareness of free HIV testing by race/ethnicity. • Adults who had been HIV tested in the past 2 years were more aware of free HIV testing (38%) than adults who had not been tested (23%). • Females whose last test was negative were more likely to have been tested for HIV (55%) compared to males (44%). • Among females, nearly three-quarters of 18-44 year olds said that HIV transmission to women is most likely to occur through sex (73%), followed by 45-64 year olds (59%) and those 65 or over (46%) (Figure 1).

Results from the 2005 LACHS indicate that: • 54% of all LA County adults (52% of females and 56% of males) did not know that medications taken during pregnancy and birth can reduce or prevent HIV transmission from mother to child. • Most notable concern noted finding that nearly 50% of 18-44 year old women (i.e., women of childbearing age) were aware that medications can help prevent perinatal HIV transmission. • Women with less than a high school education were more likely to report that they can reduce or prevent HIV transmission, compared to females with a high school education (44%), some college/trade school (47%), and college/post graduate work (44%). • Asian/Pacific Islander and white females were least aware that prenatal medications can reduce or prevent HIV transmission (60% and 57% unaware, respectively), while 51% of African American females and 46% of Latinas did not know such medications can help (Figure 3). When asked in the 2005 LACHS whether adults at higher risk for HIV transmission would consider rapid HIV testing, the percent of adults tested in the past 2 years for HIV said they would consider rapid HIV testing (85%) compared to 48% of LA County adults (regardless of gender). The 2005 LACHS found that: • 80% of LA County adults (regardless of gender) believed that HIV/AIDS is not at all serious in their community, compared to 46% of heterosexual males. • 10% were aware of free HIV testing (38%) compared to 46% of those not recently tested. • Younger adults (18-44 year olds) were more likely to support HIV testing as part of routine care (91%) than those with more education (high school: 88%, some college/trade school: 82%, college/post graduate degree: 77%). • A higher percentage (79%) of African American women were in support of routine HIV testing, compared to 49% of Latinos, 78% of whites, and 70% of Asian/Pacific Islanders. • Almost all adults at higher risk for HIV believed that HIV testing should be included as part of routine care for nearly all (88%), compared to 44% of adults at lower risk. • A greater percentage of recently tested women reported that HIV testing should be routine, compared to those not tested in the past 2 years (94% vs. 83%). • 84% of adults at lower risk for HIV said they would consider rapid HIV testing. Studies conducted in 2000 by the CDC found that among individuals in the U.S. who were tested and found to be HIV positive, nearly one-third (33%) never learned of their status because they were not aware of their infection. Since then, rates of voluntary HIV testing among adults have increased. According to results from the 2005 LACHS: • 84% of adults (regardless of gender) knew that free HIV testing is available. • Awareness of free HIV testing did not differ by level of education. • A higher percentage (91%) of Latinos were aware that free HIV testing is available, compared with 83% of whites, 78% of African Americans, and 68% of Asian/Pacific Islanders. • There was no difference in awareness of free HIV testing by race/ethnicity. • Adults who had been HIV tested in the past 2 years were more aware of free HIV testing (38%) than adults who had not been tested (23%). • Females whose last test was negative were more likely to have been tested for HIV (55%) compared to males (44%). • Among females, nearly three-quarters of 18-44 year olds said that HIV transmission to women is most likely to occur through sex (73%), followed by 45-64 year olds (59%) and those 65 or over (46%) (Figure 1).
Conclusions

Nearly 27 years after the first diagnosed cases of AIDS, HIV/AIDS remains a major public health issue in the U.S. and in LA County. According to the 2005 LACHS, however, only about half of LA County adults perceived HIV/AIDS as a very serious health concern. This may lead to complacency with regard to HIV testing, risk-reduction behaviors, and treatment and care services. Nationally, it is estimated that about one-quarter of people living with HIV are not aware of their diagnosis, and 54% of new infections occur because HIV-positive individuals do not know their own status.

Thus, it is of great importance that people in LA County be well informed about HIV transmission, prevention, testing, and treatment. While many LA County adults did not report that HIV/AIDS was a serious health problem in their community, African Americans who self-identified as gay or bisexual showed a higher level of concern about this issue. African American females may recognize HIV/AIDS as a more serious health issue because among women, they are most at risk for HIV/AIDS, and African American males are the group most impacted by HIV/AIDS overall. The lower level of concern expressed by African American males could be partly due to stigma, fear, and denial regarding HIV/AIDS.

The 2005 LACHS found that people in LA County with less income and education thought HIV/AIDS was a more serious problem, and were generally more informed about HIV/AIDS issues, compared to those with more income and education. This greater awareness and reporting among disadvantaged groups may be the result of increased education, awareness about HIV/AIDS, and development of programs for more targeted effort. The efforts of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation and the California Department of Health Services for 2005 AIDS Day are “Staying Quiet, Speaking Out,” and the campaign slogan is “Staying Quiet, Speaking Out.”

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8. Marks G, Crepaz N, Jansen RS. Estimating sexual transmission of HIV from persons aware the past 2 years. It is important that this group prevention and intervention efforts in LA County. reflect successful outcomes of targeted HIV/AIDS disadvantaged groups may be the result of increased and education. This greater awareness among HIV/AIDS.

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For additional information about the L.A. County Health Survey, visit: www.lapublichealth.org/ha...