



Global Voices Information Sheet

HIV AIDS

Brief History

June 5, 1981: The AIDS epidemic officially begins when the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports an unusual cluster of gay men with a rare form of pneumonia. Over the next 18 months, more clusters of the disease pop up among seemingly healthy men across the United States as well as a number of other opportunistic infections. Soon, the same opportunistic infections begin appearing among hemophiliacs, injection drug users and Haitian immigrants.

August 1982: The disease become known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

May 1983: A team in France isolated the virus they believe to cause AIDS.

May 1984: A team in the United States also isolates the virus.

January 1985: Both teams confirm they have identified the same virus that causes AIDS.

May 1986: The identified virus is officially named the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

HIV/AIDS Basic Information:

- AIDS is a disease of the human immune system caused by HIV.
- Transmission of the virus through direct contact of a mucous membrane or the bloodstream with bodily fluid containing HIV.
- In 2007, an estimated 33.2 million people were living with the disease worldwide.
- Although antiretroviral treatment can slow the progression of the disease and reduce mortality, there is currently no cure or vaccine.

Key Terms

immunity – insusceptibility, the state of not being susceptible

microbe - a minute life form, especially a disease-causing bacterium

pandemic – epidemic over a geographical area

transmission – the incident in which an infectious disease is transmitted

Global Voices Secondary Educator Resources

Note to Educators:

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. Activities are structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Extension and conclusion activities are included to challenge students and finally, encourage them to reflect on the issues at hand.

Since these activities are designed as discussions rather than formal lessons, assessment strategies are not included.

Pre-reading questions:

1. Make a list of major diseases that researchers have been working to cure in your lifetime (i.e., cancer, diabetes, heart disease, HIV/AIDS etc.).
2. Did HIV/AIDS get mentioned and if yes, where is it in the list?
3. Do you think that HIV/AIDS is perceived differently than other diseases? Why or why not?
4. What is meant by the terms “epidemic” (i.e., an outbreak of a disease where the source or first case is known) and “pandemic” (i.e., outbreak where source is unknown)? Has either ever happened in Canada?
5. What makes both types of outbreaks so frightening? Discuss the impact of SARS during the 1993 breakout that affected Toronto and Vancouver.
6. What are “viruses” and why are they so difficult to treat? Have you ever gone to a doctor and there was no prescription given? Instead you were told to let the “virus run its course”?
7. What diseases do you remember getting immunizations for as a child?
8. If there was an immunization for a disease like cancer, would you take it? What about a disease like AIDS? Compare answers to both and, if there is a difference ask students to consider why.
9. What is HIV/AIDS, and how is it transmitted?

Post Reading Questions:

1. What did you find most surprising in this column?
2. Using specific examples from the column, how do the authors use imagery to capture the readers’ attention (i.e., how does it help the reader appreciate the magnitude of the issue)?
3. What has made conquering the AIDS-causing virus so difficult-even after working on it for twenty-five years?
4. Without a timeline for discovering a cure or vaccine, the column describes prevention as the promising area. In small groups, brainstorm reasons why prevention for HIV/AIDS is such a complex problem (i.e., look at the countries with the highest rates of infection, historic stigma of disease, lack of education, religious/cultural beliefs etc.).

5. Prevention is used in Canada during winter periods where advertisements promote strategies including hand washing, flu shots and healthy eating.
 - a.) Did you use any of these strategies on a consistent basis last winter?
 - b.) How do you think Canadian youth would respond to prevention campaigns for HIV/AIDS? What would be needed to engage interest and change at-risk behaviours?
6. Children in affected regions can be affected in different ways by the disease. Research current statistics on children being orphaned as a result of losing both parents to HIV/AIDS. Visit the web sites below for more information.
7. Recently, a new vaccine called HPV vaccine was introduced to prevent cervical cancer in young women. There was some resistance and hesitations to give this vaccine to adolescent girls in Canada. How can this experience help us understand the challenges that may lie ahead for a future HIV/AIDS vaccine?

Extension:

8. The column presents two initiatives- searching for a cure and prevention. In partners or small groups, discuss how you would allocate financial resources towards each strategy. (Note: use statistics presented in the column along with additional statistics from the web sites listed below to support your recommendation).

Research Follow Up Activities:

1. Visit the United Nations World Health Organization to find out current statistics on HIV/AIDS including a geographical region comparison, breakdowns by age, gender, etc. (www.who.int/topics/hiv_aids/en/)
2. What information does the Canadian government provide (see Health Canada at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/index-eng.php)?
3. What activities are being undertaken by NGOs (non-governmental organizations) including the Stephen Lewis Foundation www.stephenlewisfoundation.org or the Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research at www.canfar.ca?
4. Research the status of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals – specifically the current progress made towards Goal #6, which is to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/mdgs/index/html
5. Research the issues specifically affecting women with HIV/AIDS. www.genderandaids.org
6. Check out the up to the minute statistics on the UNFPA AIDS clock. www.unfpa.org/aids_clock/index.html

Books of Interest by Canadian authors:

Stephen Lewis, *Race Against Time* (2005)

Deborah Ellis (2007) *The Heaven Shop*, and *Our Stories Our Songs-African Children Talk About AIDS* (2005)