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Health Protection Agency releases data suggesting a rise in HIV infection in younger men.

New information has just been released by the Health Protection Agency showing that HIV diagnoses among gay men below the age of 30 increased in 2011, despite a declining trend in the number of HIV diagnoses across all sexualities in the UK.

HIV diagnoses attributed to sex between men was higher than that attributed to heterosexual sex or sexual contact, and as of June 2012 this remained true.

In response to this information, Pink Therapy founder Dominic Davies has said "Increases in availability of testing might be picking up these increases, but I suspect its more complex than that," he goes on to say that it may be that increases in infection among younger men are due to an "urge to engage in risk taking", e.g. unsafe sex and drug usage, and a failure to recognise the potential consequences of these actions.

The increase in HIV diagnoses is not a surprise - figures for HIV infection for MSM has hovered around the same numbers since 2005 (2600 - 2800), and oscillations in the number of infected older individuals is not suggestive of any potential declining trend. What this information does illustrate is the requirement for action from government and health authorities, as well as renewed campaigns from HIV organisations to develop culturally sensitive and relevant health education for young people on the very prevalent risk of HIV infection.

The presence of unsafe sex is a growing worry for the gay community and is highlighted by these statistics. It may be that there is an increasing number of men that view unsafe sex and the use of recreational drugs, especially methamphetamine (crystal meth) and GHB, as a legitimate lifestyle which does not recognise the dangers it poses.

The data provides a reminder that people should be checked regularly and should also be used in invigorate health campaigns that will focus on prevention of infection and condom use.



Today, HIV is still a serious and pernicious illness. Anti-Viral Medications are not an "easy panacea", causing many minor illnesses and are toxic to the liver, but are necessary for infected individuals to live. Statistics such as those released by the HPA will draw attention to campaigns and organisations which work to prevent future infections.

Pink Therapy is hosting the 'Without Condoms' workshop on 10 November, which provides therapists with a chance to better understand the behaviours, choices and motivations of clients who engage in unsafe sex, and promote a non-judgmental approach in therapy practices.

ENDS

For more information on the Without Condoms workshop, contact workshop trainer David Stuart, david@londonfriend.org.uk.

For an in depth breakdown of the HPA report, click [here](#), the original report can be found [here](#).

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