

INTERNATIONAL: HIV/AIDS Affects Migrants Living in Wealthy Countries

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To mark World AIDS Day, the International Organization for Immigration (IOM) focused on the plight of migrants, who, it reports, are disproportionately affected by HIV and AIDS in high-income countries. Although this year's UNAIDS report on the global AIDS epidemic showed a sharp decline in HIV infection in low- and middle-income countries, the number of infections is rising in more affluent nations. According to the IOM, migrants are particularly badly affected by AIDS in high-income countries. Chris Lom, an IOM spokesperson, noted that migrants and mobile populations are at high risk worldwide because they face marginalization, exclusion, and barriers to accessing health promotion and health care that indigenous people do not face. UNAIDS reports that 45 countries, territories, and areas impose restrictions on the entry of people with HIV. Also, there is a lack of awareness of migrants' vulnerability to the disease in high-income countries. In Canada, the estimated infection rate of migrants from HIV-endemic countries is 8.5 times higher than among other Canadians. In the United States, a study between 2007 and 2010 showed that foreign-born people made up 13 percent of the total population, but accounted for more than 16 percent of new HIV infections. Also, in the European Union, more than one-third of all HIV infections acquired through heterosexual transmission are among migrants from a country with a generalized HIV epidemic. Lom stated that the highest incidence of HIV in the United States, Canada, and Europe can be found among individuals from Africa and the Caribbean, which are considered HIV-endemic countries. Lom also explained that migrants often get infected after their arrival in the new country. The IOM urges nations to reach out to migrants to make prevention information, treatment, care, and support available. UNAIDS reports that 2.5 million individuals were newly infected with HIV in 2011 and an estimated 1.7 million died. However, these figures are encouraging, as there are now 700,000 fewer new infections worldwide than 10 years ago and 600,000 fewer deaths than in 2005. The antiretroviral drugs used to treat HIV are responsible for much of the progress.

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