

EDITORIAL

AIDS and Asia

The AIDS pandemic has increasingly emerged as a global threat to health with long-term social consequences. By the end of June 1988, a total of 100,400 cases had been reported to the World Health Organization from 138 countries. Of these, about 65 per cent were reported from the USA, about 10 per cent from other countries on the American continent, about 12 per cent each from Europe and Africa, about 1 per cent from the Oceania and only about 0.25 per cent from Asia.

Since not all AIDS cases are yet reported, the WHO estimates that the cumulative number of AIDS patients is 200,000 or slightly more than twice the existed report. The global estimate is 5 to 10 million infected individuals. Assuming that 10 to 30 per cent of those infected with HIV will develop AIDS within a 5-year period (probably a minimum estimate), this means that between half a million and three million people will get the full blown disease.

In Asia, 243 AIDS patients were reported from 21 countries and 50% of them were reported from Japan and Israel. Low incidence have been reported from South-East Asia. Magnitude of threat, however, is serious enough in this silent

area. Therefore, preventive measures have to be strengthened. The development of rapid and reliable laboratory screening tests to use in the poor countries through biomedical research is urgently needed. Modern epidemiology holds a key function in AIDS research in developing countries. Studies on the occurrence of the disease among population and infected rate especially in the high risk group are of basic importance for all planning and for evaluating the measures which have been implemented. In this regard, epidemiological informations from some Asian countries will be cited as example.

Bangladesh

Up to May 1988, no AIDS cases have been reported. The extent of intravenous drug use (IVDA) is extremely limited. HIV serosurveys have been undertaken among paid donors, local workers and other high risk groups. No HIV infected person has been identified among 7,277 persons tested.

India

Nineteen AIDS cases have been reported, including 8 foreigners. Over 300,000 persons have been

tested for anti-HIV antibodies and 302 HIV-infected persons were confirmed by Western blot tests. Nearly all infected persons were prostitutes. IVDA is reported to be rare in India.

Indonesia

Two cases of AIDS have been found among foreigners. The first cases was reported in 1987. Of 48,000 persons tested for HIV infection, 8 were confirmed, including 3 foreigners, one hemophiliac and the others high-risk sexual behaviour individuals.

Nepal

No AIDS case has been reported. 6,200 persons (STD patients, prisoners, blood donors, students returning from abroad) have been screened so far, but no infected person has been identified. A national workshop on laboratory screening has been planned for the near future.

Sri Lanka

One case of AIDS has been reported. So far 25,000 blood samples from blood donors, male and female prostitutes, homosexuals and prisoners have been tested with 6 positive by Western blots. Three were foreign-

ners and 3 were Sri Lankans who had acquired infections abroad.

Thailand

Nine cases of AIDS have been reported between 1984 and 1988. Over 300,000 blood samples have

been tested for anti-HIV infections which 650 asymptomatic infections and 27 ARC have been found. Among 147,000 blood donors (except from prisoners) no HIV infection has been detected. The HIV infected rate has been identified in 0.01% of 146,000 workers, who have applied

for visas to work in the Middle-East. The prevalence rate was 0.09% in 15,000 female prostitutes and 1.3% among male prostitutes. A higher rate (4.5%) has been found among 7,615 IVDA. HIV infections among IVDA has increased considerably during the last 4 months.

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