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THE ALARMING SURGE OF HIV/AIDS IN DISTRICT DIR, KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA PAKISTAN DEMANDS URGENT ACTION

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ABSTRACT

The sudden rise in the number of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) outbreaks in District Dir Lower, Pakistan, is a serious issue for the local population, and hospitals of the area. The first official case of HIV in Pakistan was reported in the year 1987. Since then, the number of people living with HIV in the country has increased significantly. According to the data mentioned by UNAIDS, in the year 2023, approximately 290,000 individuals including both adults and children are living with HIV in Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

The sudden rise in the number of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) outbreaks in District Dir Lower, Pakistan, is a serious issue for the local population, and hospitals of the area. The first official case of HIV in Pakistan was reported in the year 1987. Since then, the number of people living with HIV in the country has increased significantly. According to the data mentioned by UNAIDS, in the year 2023, approximately 290,000 individuals including both adults and children are living with HIV in Pakistan.

UNAIDS

In December 2023, district Dir Lower has observed a rapid increase in HIV-positive cases. However, the official statistics for this district are not separately mentioned in national reports, a report of 2017, indicated that district Lower Dir were carrying the highest burden of HIV/AIDS in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, because approximately 94 patients out of the total suspected HIV/AIDS patients were belonging district Lower Dir.

The Tribune

The increase in number of the HIV/AIDS cases includes unsafe practices such as careless transfusions of blood, the use of non-sterilized instruments in dental procedures, injecting drug use (IDU), and unprotected sexual practices. In addition to this, the stigma linked with discussing these subjects exacerbates the situation further, leading to big impact on the vulnerable populations without access to awareness and education regarding the preventive measures.

A considerable number of cases in Pakistan have been attributed to males having sex with males, IDUs, and other high-risk population such as transgender society and sex workers. Some reports mentioned that a

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notable number of partners contract the virus from their HIV/AIDS infected spouses, representing the wave effect of this epidemic within some families.

To deal with this crisis in District Dir Lower, the following actions are suggested:

- **Public Awareness initiatives:**

Organize educational campaigns to aware the community about the transmission of HIV/AIDS and its prevention. Motivate and engage local leaders and influencers to fight stigma and encourage testing for early diagnoses.

- **Enhanced Testing and Treatment Accessibility:**

There is a need of more ART centers in the rural areas. However, affordability for the testing and treatment and confidentiality for seeking information and help should be make sure.

- **Targeted Outreach to Vulnerable Groups:**

Initiatives including the provision of Inclusive education and healthcare services to IDUs, transgender individuals, and sex workers to control the transmission of HIV.

- **Strengthened Collaboration:**

Partnership is needed with international health organizations to advance access to resources, expertise, and funding to effectively tackle the epidemic.

The government, non-governmental organizations, and healthcare providers must adopt a multidisciplinary approach to combat this rising threat to the population of the area. Without taking an immediate action, the growing number of cases in District Dir Lower could devastate the local healthcare settings and endanger the bigger community.

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