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HIV/AIDS IN EUROPE. Moving from death sentence to chronic disease management

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The WHO book compiled by three editors brings together new information regarding the occurrence and spreading of HIV/AIDS in Europe over the 25 years that have elapsed since AIDS was described for the first time. They used and analyzed data provided by national experts from the member states of the European WHO Region (their names are provided in the introduction part).

The preface by the WHO Regional Director Marc Danzon clearly specifies current tasks and targets of the HIV/AIDS programs in Europe: to provide treatment and suppress further spreading of HIV/AIDS in Europe. This requires a detailed analysis of the current status and future development. This book tries to make such an analysis. The author of the preface concludes stating that the book will be worth less than the paper it is printed on unless it leads to health improvements.

Chapter 1 by *S. Matič* summarizes the occurrence of HIV/AIDS in Europe, stating the epidemic of HIV/AIDS in 52 countries of the WHO European region has not finished yet. The past

showed that many forecasts had not been accomplished and unforeseen development of HIV/AIDS has become a rule, rather than an exception. Regardless, European experience with HIV/AIDS epidemic brought certain useful insights and hints as to how to reach relative success, what should not be done and what should be the nearest goal to apply an efficient HIV/AIDS management in Europe. The author describes the unique character of the HIV/AIDS epidemic using a number of characteristics, describing several waves of epidemic in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, including the biggest one in Eastern Europe, related to an increased use of syringes for drug application. We have been able to experience certain stabilization across Europe, including bigger or smaller fluctuations in some affected groups.

Chapter 2 by *C. Park* deals with reactions of the society to a new fatal disease that had affected mainly men having sexual intercourse with other men. It analyses discriminatory trends, rights of HIV infected persons to a respectable life, influence of

poverty to HIV/AIDS spreading, a prevention strategy at local levels and the role of treatment in lives of infected people and within the process of HIV/AIDS spreading.

J. Godinho and *J. Veen* discuss in **Chapter 3** the influence of drug abuse on HIV/AIDS spreading. They cover laws and regulations concerning use and selling of drugs in the member states of the European Region. They conclude that the current trend reflecting a close relation between drug abuse and HIV/AIDS spreading is to reduce the recourses for minor offences in the area of drug use and apply stricter repression of drug dealers. Emphasis is placed on addiction overcoming and substitution treatment and "harm reduction" programs. Also the view of addicts has changed; these days they are viewed as patients rather than offenders. These changes together with prevention should reduce both drug abuse and HIV/AIDS spreading.

Chapter 4 deals in more detail with the issue of drug abuse, "harm reduction" programs and HIV/AIDS. The author is *M. C. Donoghoe*.

Chapter 5 by *H. Stover* and *R. Lines* deals with the 25-year history of HIV/AIDS in prisons. They conclude that the respond of European prison systems to the challenge of HIV/AIDS and other blood transmitted diseases is generally lower in European prisons than in civic communities, very often it is slow and insufficient. Prison systems of the member states have to be improved in this respect.

Chapter 6 by *M. Guariniery* and *L. Hollander* covers the role of civic society in treatment and HIV infection control. Very important elements are non-governmental organizations, mainly those of PLWHA (= people living with HIV/AIDS). The authors note the lack of uniformity among these organizations, the necessity of their close cooperation and activation so that the voice of those with the biggest personal experience is the loudest and most respected.

Chapter 7 by *B. G. Gazard* and *R. S. Jones* describes advances in HIV treatment over the past two decades. The title clearly identifies the current options of treatment: from death to life. The final part describes different stages of treatment that consisted in opportunist injections and pain relief at the beginning, summarizing treatment options of these days: today we can say to a newly diagnosed patient that if he or she uses the prescribed medication properly and will agree with his or her physician and respect a long-term treatment, the fact that they may live to an old age is not only possible, but has become a standard. Naturally, it is important to ensure that all infected people including those living in poor countries with the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence may access the treatment.

Chapter 8 by *K. de Joncheere* and *N. Sutenkova* is appropriately called "Money and Power: To Make Anti-retrovirus Preparations Available in Needed Countries". Using examples of Eastern Europe, the authors document that not all HIV infected people in Eastern Europe can access anti-retrovirus treatment. The reasons continue to include high prices of the medication and the indifferent approach of governments towards the issue of HIV/AIDS. The cooperation of state authorities, international sponsors and pharmaceuticals is required to achieve the goal – make the anti-retrovirus therapy available to all HIV infected people in the whole world.

Chapter 9 by *R. A. Autun* describes and analyses the reaction of European health care system to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Chapter 10 by *J. Veen*, *J. Godinho* deals with the co-infection of HIV and TB as a critical moment of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The most affected region is Eastern Europe where nearly three quarters of AIDS patients are also infected with TB. An European strategy has been prepared recently to decrease the load of HIV/AIDS and TB co-infection.

Chapter 11 by *U. Laukamm-Josten*, *I. Klavs*, *A. Rento*, *K. Fenton* analyses the occurrence of STI in Europe stating that it has not impacted the HIV epidemic significantly yet but such development may be expected. STI prevention uses the same methods as HIV/AIDS.

Chapter 12 by *B. D. Gushulak*, *D. W. MacPherson* analyses the impact of population migration on HIV/AIDS in Europe deducing the necessity of respond to this factor at local levels.

Chapter 13 by *R. M. Thomas*, *L. Brussa*, *V. Munk*, *K. Jirešová* deals with the issue of migrating sexual worker and their risks in Europe. These workers are a very endangered group. There are several degrees of the risk and injury to health or life. Their status, lives and working conditions are highly impacted by social and political factors.

Chapter 14 by *C. Watts*, *C. Zimmermann* and *B. Roche* deals with facts regarding violence against women (including home violence), namely in relation to migration of women. The authors believe that this problem should be a priority of the HIV programs.

Chapter 15 (last) by *B. L. Bernitz*, *B. Rechel* asks to what extent the HIV data from Central and Eastern Europe is reality or fiction. It is obvious that Eastern Europe faces a sharp increase in HIV/AIDS occurrence. Both the surveillance programs and access to laboratory tests need to be improved in this region as well as data registration and processing.

The Appendix by *S. Nielsen* and *J. F. Lazarus* deals with HIV/AIDS profiles of individual countries of the WHO European Region and their specifications.

CONCLUSION:

The WHO publication "HIV/AIDS IN EUROPE" (editors: Srđan Matic, Jeffrey V. Lazarus and Martin C. Donoghoe) gives a comprehensive view of the history and development of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Europe. The WHO European region is divided into Central Asian republics and Western, Central and Eastern Europe. It describes the differences and specifics of HIV/AIDS in each of the areas. It notes a time difference of the epidemic, differences in HIV transmission, impact on individual population groups, access to tests and treatment and relation to other infections, namely TB and STI. It emphasizes the importance of cooperation of all parts of society at national and international levels, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Through detailed analyses of the current situation it wants to reach efficient preventive programs in HIV/AIDS control.

Each chapter includes a long list of quotations which allows the reader to find further information in the references.

The book can be recommended to all people who work in the field of HIV/AIDS as a valuable comprehensive material and guidelines for practical measures both at national and international levels.

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