Aids In Africa Essay, Research Paper

AIDS In Africa: A Rising Problem

Africa is a continent with many social issues and problems. These social issues range from overpopulation, racism, and a countless number of disease epidemics. One of the most deadly and uncontrollable of these diseases is the HIV virus, or AIDS. AIDS is an illness that involves several phases. It is caused by a virus that can be passed from person to person. AIDS impairs the human body’s immune system the system responsible for warding off disease and leaves the victim susceptible to various infections. AIDS was first identified in the United States in 1981, when 189 cases were reported to the Centers for Disease Control. Within a decade the disease had spread to all populated areas of the world. In the United States there are about 65,000 new cases every year. The origin of the AIDS virus is unknown, but it may have originated in Central Africa.

Perhaps the continent with the biggest problem of the AIDS disease is Africa. The region of Africa with the biggest outbreak recently has been South Africa. Levels of the HIV infection had increased in eight of the nine provinces in South Africa. The province with the highest increase is KwaZulu, which showed an increase from 19.9% in 1996, to 26.9% in 1997. The following table shows the percentage of increase of the AIDS virus from 1996-1997.

Estimated HIV Infections

W.Cape E. Cape N. Cape Free Sate Kwazulu/Natal Mpumulanga

1996 3.09% 8.20% 6.37% 17.49% 19.90% 15.77%

1997 6.29% 12.61% 8.63% 19.57% 26.92% 22.55%

Unlike in developed countries, where over 90% of all AIDS victims are homosexual males, Africa AIDS is suffered by both men and women in equal numbers. At the 10th international AIDS Conference, Dr. Yuichi Shiokawa said that the African AIDS epidemic could be brought under control if Africans restrained their sexual cravings. Other doctors disagree with Dr. Yuichi Shiokawa. They claim that in Africa AIDS is not an epidemic linked to sexual behavior, but is a new name for old diseases that result from poor health care, and widespread malnutrition.

There are a number of consequences that come along with being infected with AIDS. For example with having millions of Africans threatened by AIDS may be to make it politically correct to use the continent as a laboratory for vaccine trials. Another consequence is the distribution of anti-HIV drugs, like AZT.

The AIDS epidemic is also a huge problem in the Sub-Sahara African region also. About 11 million adults and up to one million children in this region have been infected with HIV since the virus was first found in the early 1980s. AIDS is also lowering the life expectancy of people in this region of Africa. By the year 2010, it is estimated that AIDS will have lowered the average life span from 66 to 33 years in Zambia, from 70 to 40 years in Zimbabwe, from 68 to 40 years in Kenya, and from 59 to 31 years in Uganda. The countries most effected by AIDS are concentrated in a region along east and southern Africa stretching from Uganda and Kenya southward to include Rwanada, Burundi, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana.

Out of all the social issues that the continent of Africa has, or is dealing with, AIDS is perhaps the most important. With the rising number of AIDS victims each year, Africa must make a drastic change in their culture and economy if they want to control this deadly disease epidemic.