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Rwanda: HIV/AIDS

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HIV/AIDS in Rwanda



Introduction

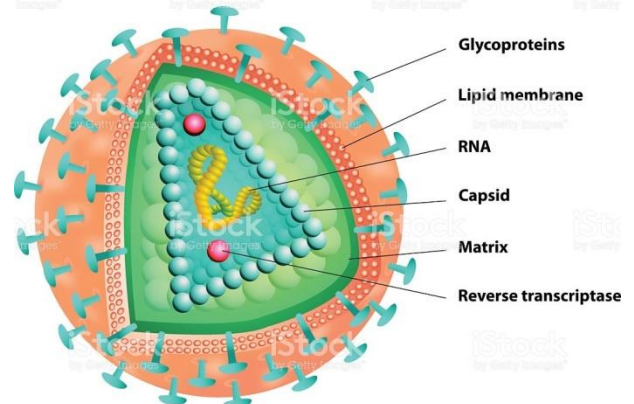
Rwanda is a country located in Africa; it is a land locked nation that is bordered by four countries: Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The population as of January 2018 is around 12 million people. Rwanda is one of the most heavily populated countries in Africa. The median age in the country is about nineteen years of age, and the life expectancy is around sixty. There are three main languages spoken in Rwanda: English, French, and Kinyarwanda. About 65% of the population in Rwanda is Roman Catholic; the other religions are 9% Protestant and about 1% Muslim, the rest of the population has no religion or has spiritual beliefs. There are three major ethnic groups in Rwanda. There are the Hutus, making up about 84% of the population. The Tutsis which make up around 15%, and finally the Twa people who only make up a small portion of the population at 1%. Power struggles between the Hutu people and the Tutsi people have become catastrophic in the past, resulting in a large genocide of the Tutsi people in 1994. Rwanda has an elected president, is a republic, and has a multi-party democratic system. Over 60% of people living in Rwanda make less than \$1.25 a day.

HIV/AIDS

Human immunodeficiency virus, more commonly known as HIV, is currently an incurable virus that is transmitted through certain bodily fluids such as: breast milk, vaginal secretions, sperm, and blood. The virus attacks the body's immune system, specifically attacking the body's T cells which aid in the immune system's ability to fight off infections. This results in a compromised immune system which leads to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), the most severe phase of HIV. HIV/AIDS can also lead to cancers and other viruses invading the body in its weakened state. There is no cure for HIV/AIDS, but

with proper medical attention one can control the virus.

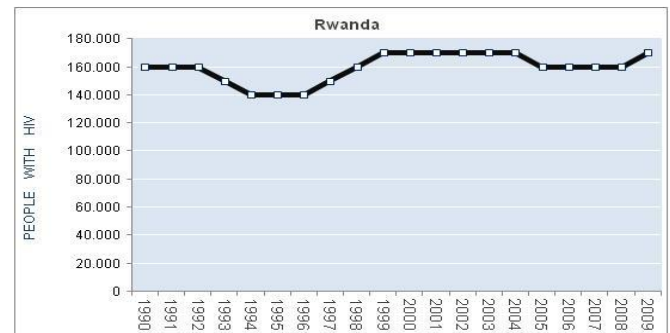
STRUCTURE OF THE HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV)



<https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/diagram-of-the-hiv-virus-vector-gm500426119-42895954>

Epidemiology

The populations that are most at risk for contracting HIV in Rwanda are adults aged 15 and over, people in urban areas, and people living in the capital city of Kigali. 13.2% of people living in Kigali, 6.3% of people in other urban cities, and 2.8% of rural people have HIV/AIDS. Around 220,000 people of all ages are living with HIV in Rwanda. Adults aged between 15 and 49 with HIV are 3.1% of the total adult population. The people who have contracted HIV/AIDS are more at risk for contracting other major diseases such as hepatitis A and C and tuberculosis.



<http://www.lifemanagementonline.com/health-info/statistics/hiv-aids-life-expectancy-rwanda.php>

Treatment Plans

The Rwandan National AIDS Strategic Plan, includes strategies that prioritize information, education, and communication, these strategies target adults fifteen and older who are sexually active. These strategies have increased the awareness of HIV/AIDS and how it is passed from one person to another, and how to prevent one from contracting HIV/AIDS. Condoms have been distributed to some communities for free, or for a very low cost, to help reduce the amount of risky sexual behavior that is associated with HIV/AIDS. Even with the knowledge of condom's effectiveness against HIV, a lot of the population continues to not use them as directed. Other strategies in Rwanda include: mass media communication, community outreach, and campaigns to end HIV/AIDS in Rwanda. Young people are exposed with HIV knowledge in schools through sexual health classes, anti-AIDS groups, and outreach programs for out of school youth. Rwanda has also implemented antiretroviral (ART) treatment to cover everyone living with HIV in 2016. This helps the suppressed immune system, and they hope to see more patients continue regular treatment throughout their lifetimes.

Conclusion

I believe the continued approach of mass media attention will help the coming generations with continuing the road towards an HIV free society. I also believe that condoms could be an effective way of preventing the spread of HIV, along with other forms of contraceptive. Requiring sex workers to use condoms could help reduce the spread, regulating the sex industry could help the country significantly in its route to a HIV free society. Having access to STD and HIV clinics for the poor and rural people of Rwanda could also help the spreading of this disease. I believe with the implementing of free or low cost clinics could be very beneficial for people living and people not living with HIV/AIDS. Education and safety for the people is what is going to keep them healthy. Rwanda is on its way to being a HIV free country, and hopefully the coming generations will not have the same implications as the past generations.

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