



HIV STRATEGY FOR SASKATCHEWAN 2010 - 2013

A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY IS REQUIRED TO REDUCE THE RAPID INCREASE OF NEW CASES OF HIV IN SASKATCHEWAN AND TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR HIV-POSITIVE PEOPLE

Executive Summary

Saskatchewan has seen a significant increase in new cases of HIV since 2003 and currently has the highest rates in Canada at twice the national average. (20.8 vs 9.3/100,000) The epidemiology of HIV in Saskatchewan is different than the rest of Canada, with new HIV cases associated predominantly with injection drug use (75%) with First Nations and Métis women under age 30 accounting for a disproportionate number of those cases.

Cost

The impact on provincial health and social services is significant. The current conservative estimate of the direct cost to the health care system in Saskatchewan is approximately \$40 million per year. Indirect costs, including prevention services, attributable to HIV/AIDS have been estimated to be 2.4 times direct costs. This cost rises with every new case.

Strategic Approach

A comprehensive, integrated and provincially implemented approach to HIV, with consideration of hepatitis C, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections, is required.

This strategy will form the framework for current and planned work to address those issues in Saskatchewan.

The HIV strategy is aligned under four main pillars;

- Surveillance
- Clinical management
- Prevention and harm reduction
- Community engagement and education

Surveillance

The Goals

- Earlier detection of cases
- Decrease in number of new cases (within 4 to 5 years)
- A decrease in the number of sexually transmitted infections

The Plan

- Increased access to testing
- Increased understanding of the at-risk groups
- Improved information and communication at all levels

Clinical Management

The Goals

- Increased quality of life for HIV patients
- Increased proportion of HIV-positive pregnant women receiving pre- and post-natal care
- Decreased number of HIV patients progressing rapidly to AIDS
- Decrease hospital admissions for HIV-related illnesses
- Zero perinatal transmission

The Plan

- Adopting a non-discriminatory patient first approach with cross-disciplinary teams
- Focused learning opportunities for all health care providers
- Best practice plans and protocols in place for enhanced clinical management

Prevention and Harm Reduction

The Goals

- Increased access to holistic centers focusing on prevention and well-being
- Fixed and mobile locations offering mix of services including health and social services
- Decrease in transmission of blood-borne viruses and sexually transmitted diseases
- Reduction of injection drug use

The Plan

- Review of medical/nursing curriculums for substance abuse and chemical dependency
- Establish prevention and wellbeing centers with expanded access to needle exchange programs and other harm reduction measures to promote and encourage safe behaviors
- Expand addictions prevention and treatment
- Incorporate mental health and addictions programming into holistic center approach

Community Engagement and Education

The Goals

- Reduce stigma and increase understanding of HIV among the residents of Saskatchewan
- Increased support to HIV-positive people by their families and communities
- Increased community and leadership engagement to address community related risk factors ie: adequate housing

The Plan

- Engage elders of First Nations and Métis communities
- Establish HIV positive peer to peer networks (positive teens, IDU's, and HIV-positive mothers)
- Public education on prevention and awareness of HIV
- Targeted prevention treatment and healthy living for HIV-positive individuals
- Strengthen prevention measures that protect children and youth. ie: KidsFirst programming focuses on areas such as home visiting, parent engagement, and mental health and addictions services

The Saskatchewan HIV Strategy provides a guideline for steps to address the challenge of rising HIV rates in the province over the next three years, but is not limited, as continued research may reveal new opportunities or practices which can be effectively adopted. The complex nature of addictions, which usually includes a host of other challenges such as poverty, housing and mental health issues, all need to be considered within a comprehensive strategy. This strategy will benefit from current action underway in the area of prevention and treatment of addictions. A multi-disciplinary team approach is well suited to the focus on preventing, assessing, treating and controlling communicable disease in Saskatchewan.

Improvements to address the transmission of infectious diseases are already underway with, for example, case management for positive pregnant women and increased access to rapid testing.

The success of the strategy will mean that, over the next couple of years, we will see increased HIV rates due to increased testing and tracing. It is expected that the HIV rates will decline in years three or four as the intervention/prevention initiatives start showing effectiveness. However successful implementation of the strategy will also rely on the continued involvement of many partners and stakeholders. From May to the end of October 2009, four expert working groups provided expertise to guide the development of the refined HIV strategy. These groups included representation from health care providers, community based organizations, and First Nations and Métis organizations.

At the March 2010 session, leadership at all levels was identified as a key component to the strategy. In addition to the standard health and social service oriented and community based organizations, officials at the municipal level need to also become more proactive and involved.

The overarching goals of the Saskatchewan HIV Strategy are to: increase the rate of testing; ensure access to therapy and treatment; reduce the rate of new infections, including no new HIV-positive babies; increase quality of life and decrease discrimination. It is essential we have a sustainable plan that can adapt to meet a growing need.

Leadership, at all levels, must affirm the critical importance of the determinants of health in effecting significant change.

Population Health Branch
Saskatchewan Ministry of Health
www.health.gov.sk.ca/hiv-aids-reports