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Infectious Disease Prevention Efforts in Southern Ukraine

Michael Ardovino

"Vykhod", Mykolaiv, Ukraine

Statement: Ukraine has one of the highest rates of HIV and hepatitis transmission in the world due a great part to intravenous drug use.

Purpose: The Mykolaiv charity foundation "Vykhod" implemented the Respond Project, an effort to treat clients with contagious diseases, specifically HIV. The Health of Partners component looks at treating HIV sexual partners

Method: The foundation focused on southern Ukraine for three month time periods in 2016 and 2017, testing overs 1000 subjects. Samples represent Nikolaev City, Bashtank, New Bug, Voznesensk, Pervomaisk and Ochakiv in the oblast of Nikolaev

Program Dates	Client Test	HIV+ Response	Medical Treatment Sought	Anti-Viral Treatment
Jan 1- March 31 2016	191	14	9	3
April 1 – June 30 2016	177	17	11	4
July 1- Sep 30 2016	181	16	14	12
Oct 1 – Dec 31 2016	153	13	10	9
Jan 1 – March 31 2017	157	13	9	10
April 1 – June 30 2017	171	14	7	6
July1–Sept 30 2017	166	12	8	7
Total	1196	99	68	51

1196 subjects took HIV tests over two years and 99 reflected a positive response, an 8.28% rate. 68 subjects began medical treatment and 51 were referred to anti-retroviral therapy.

Findings:

1. Participating clients report an increase in the use of condoms and talking frankly about HIV and sexual behavior as they relate to using drugs. Information received at "Vykhod" proved decisive in actions taken.
2. Clients report that they now feel they can live as HIV survivors rather than most certainly die from a terminal illness.
3. HIV positive drug users now talk more openly to their sexual partners who may not be infected and how important medical treatment is to reduce the likelihood of transmission.
4. "Vykhod" staff used their expertise to force strong bonds with clients as well as partnering public health organizations.
5. Funding from donors such as USAID has given the program more positive attention especially from potential European contributors.
6. Program evaluation efforts are utilized and provide useful best lessons and practices.

Conclusion: *Respond preventive* behavior techniques can effectively reduce the spread of HIV. An expansion of the program can have positive benefits across Ukraine

Biography

Michael Ardovino has over ten years experience working in international development and is currently a volunteer for a health NGO in Mykolaiv, Ukraine. He has a PhD and research in political science focusing on Eastern Europe. He is a former research analyst at USAID.

ardovinomike@gmail.com