

Number of registered HIV/AIDS patients at PIMS increases

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The number of patients of HIV (Human Immune-deficiency Virus) infection getting treatment at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) has increased by 50 per cent in 2010 as compared to the total number of registered patients of the infection till 2009.

By the end of 2009, a total of 715 patients with HIV positive and AIDS (Acquired Immune-deficiency Syndrome) were registered at the centre for treatment of AIDS at the PIMS that was established by the National Aids Control Programme and Ministry of Health in November 2005. Data collected by 'The News' revealed that the PIMS registered another 308 patients of the disease in 2010.

According to Head of Aids Centre at PIMS Professor Dr Rizwan Qazi, the total number of registered patients in the Aids Centre has reached to 1023 of which nearly 400 have been suffering from full blown AIDS and are on treatment of AIDS.

He said that all the patients registered with the PIMS have been receiving medicines free of cost and all the investigations at PIMS are done free of cost including the PCR test which is very costly in the private sector. "At present, four patients suffering from AIDS are admitted in PIMS," he said.

"Most of the people suffering from AIDS are intravenous drug users who share same needle for injecting drugs. Due to the increasing awareness, good screening of blood and good working of NGOs, the number of

patients coming to PIMS for registration is increasing," said Deputy Director at PIMS Dr Waseem Ahmed Khawaja while talking to 'The News'.

He said that there are 157 female patients, 19 children and 847 male victims of the disease have been registered with PIMS for treatment. "The patients are coming to PIMS mainly from NWFP, Punjab and Middle East," he said and added that on average, 10 to 15 new patients are being registered with the PIMS every month.

"In October 2009, a total of 26 new patients of HIV and AIDS were registered with PIMS while in November, PIMS registered 27 new patients and in December, 15 new patients got registered with the PIMS for treatment," said Dr Khawaja.

It is worth mentioning that the causes of spread of the disease is yet not clear to many patients as they think that AIDS is spread by the direct contact or using the same utensils of the patient.

Dr Khawaja said that many male patients did not want to disclose to their family members including their wives that they have been suffering from AIDS and this may result in spread of the infection. "Also prostitution and homosexuality are contributing to rise in the number of patients with the infection in Pakistan," he said.

He advised that the people suffering from HIV and AIDS should come for the treatment in the medical Outpatient department of PIMS which is opened daily on all working days. "Facilities for counselling are also available at PIMS," he said.

BCC Section, NACP: