Financial AIDS

U.S. heterosexuals living in urban poverty- regardless of race or ethnicity- face alarming rates of HIV.

December 10, 2010 By Trent Straube

Money can't buy you love—but it might lower your risk of HIV/AIDS. A federal report found that heterosexuals living in U.S. urban poverty face a 2.1 percent HIV prevalence rate—that's more than 20 times higher than their straight counterparts in the rest of the nation.

In the overall U.S. population, the HIV prevalence rate for blacks is eight times that for whites, and the rate for Latinos is three times that for whites. But in areas of urban poverty, the differences evaporate and everyone faces elevated HIV prevalence.

As Paul Denning, MD, MPH, an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and coauthor of the report, sums up: "The lower a person's socioeconomic status, the higher the HIV infection rate."

Why? Because impoverished communities bear the burden of poor health care infrastructure, high incarceration rates, unstable housing and employment, addiction and domestic violence—all contributors to HIV risk, explains Sharen Duke, MPH, who heads AIDS Service Center NYC, which primarily deals with clients who are impoverished.

Plus, high HIV prevalence means that poor folks who engage in seemingly low-risk behavior—women in monogamous relationships, for example—are more likely to contract the virus than those who engage in riskier behavior but don't live in poverty.

The stats in the CDC report are alarming because 46 percent of blacks live in poverty, compared with 40 percent of Latinos and 10 percent of whites.

This means it may be best to focus HIV interventions on entire urban neighborhoods and not just on at-risk groups. After all, as Duke says, "Where you live may determine your likelihood for HIV infection."

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/heterosexuals-HIV-Poverty-19538-2840