AIDS at 25: Women and the HIV Epidemic

News and Events

The Epidemic

1981

- First cases of immune deficiency reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); women are among those diagnosed

1982

- Name "AIDS" given to deadly new disease

1983

- Liz Smith is first major newspaper columnist to write about AIDS

1984

- Social worker Caitlin Ryan becomes first executive director of AID Atlanta, the oldest AIDS Service Organization (ASO) in Southeast
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Secretary Margaret Heckler says an AIDS vaccine will be available in 2 years
- Dr. Robert Gallo (U.S. National Cancer Institute) and Dr. Luc Montagnier (Institut Pasteur, Paris) co-discover HIV

1985

- HIV tests become available
- Haitian-born social worker Marie St. Cyr becomes first director of New York-based Women and AIDS Resource Network (WARN)
- Dr. Mathilde Krim, Dr. Michael Gottlieb and actress Elizabeth Taylor launch American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR)
- Singers Bette Midler and Barbra Streisand hold fundraiser for San Francisco AIDS Foundation
- Mother Teresa visits AIDS patients in Washington, D.C.

1986

- Women represent 7% of U.S. AIDS cases
- Activist Dawn Averitt diagnosed with HIV. She later founds Women's Information Service and Exchange
- Elizabeth Glaser co-founds Pediatric AIDS Foundation after learning she and her children have HIV

1987

- First HIV treatment, AZT, approved by FDA at a dose of 2 pills every 4 hours (12 tablets per day)
- Surgeon General C. Everett Koop urges any woman considering pregnancy to be tested for HIV
- Princess Diana opens first AIDS hospital ward in U.K. and campaigns against AIDS-related discrimination
- Singer Madonna gives her first AIDS benefit concert

1988

1989

1990

1991

- Women represent 22% of new AIDS cases among African Americans
- Mary Fisher, woman living with HIV, addresses Republican National Convention
- International Conference on AIDS focuses on women
- Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) launches Lesbian AIDS Project
- Miss America Leanza Cornett makes AIDS awareness a priority of her "reign"
- ASO Women Alive founded in Los Angeles

1992

- First National Women and HIV Conference held in Washington, D.C.
- ACT UP protests at the CDC to expand AIDS definitions to include women-specific diseases
- Florida resident Kimberly Bergalis accuses her dentist of infecting her with HIV during a dental procedure

1993

- FDA approves the female condom
- CDC expands official definition of AIDS to include gynecological manifestations of HIV infection
- President Clinton appoints Kristine Gebbie as nation's first AIDS "czar"
- Dr. Joycelyn Elders appointed Surgeon General; she resigns in 1994 following controversial remarks on sexuality

1994

- FDA approves use of AZT for preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission after results of ACTG 076 study show perinatal use of drug cuts infection in newborns by 67%
- Former *Playboy* "Playmate" Rebekka Armstrong diagnosed with HIV
- TV star Amanda Blake ("Miss Kitty" on "Gunsmoke") dies of AIDS
- New York State passes legislation requiring all newborns to be screened for HIV

1995

- Advent of Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART) with introduction of first protease inhibitor; dosing is 2–3 times daily, totaling more than 20 tablets
- Dr. Helene Gayle named director of CDC's HIV division
- Actress Sharon Stone becomes amfAR's celebrity spokeswoman
- Mary-Louise Parker plays HIV-positive leading character in hit movie "Boys on the Side"

1996

- AIDS becomes number-one cause of death for African-American women ages 25–44
- AIDS advocate Rebecca Denison delivers twin girls, becoming one of the first HIV-positive women to talk publicly about her decision to become pregnant
- Latina talk-show host Cristina Saralegui launches the AIDS awareness organization Arriba La Vida ("Up with Life")

1997

1998

- South African AIDS activist Gugu Diamini is beaten to death after revealing her HIV status

1999

- Ana Oliveira becomes first woman executive director of GMHC
- The Global Campaign for Microbicides is founded at the XII International AIDS Conference in Geneva

2000

- Israeli singer Ofra Haza dies of AIDS
- Civil rights leader Coretta Scott King launches campaign to bring AIDS Memorial Quilt to black colleges
- U.N. General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS calls on nations to assess impact of epidemic "at all levels of society, especially on women"
- DHHS releases first manual focused on medical care for HIV-positive women
- Wisconsin teenager Korrin Krause is fired from her job at Quality Foods IGA because she is HIV positive
- Dr. Julie Gerberding becomes director of CDC
- Singer Mary J. Blige participates in Elton John Foundation/MAC AIDS Fund PSA safe sex campaign
- U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan convenes Task Force on Women, Girls and HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa
- Author J.L. King publishes *On The Down Low*, leading to media coverage of black men who sleep with men but still identify as heterosexual
- UNAIDS reports that, globally, women account for nearly 50% of all people living with HIV worldwide
- Simpler treatment regimens are introduced featuring 2 pills a day
- FDA approves rapid HIV test, which gives results in 20 minutes
- Women account for 30% of new U.S. HIV diagnoses, up from 21% in 1996

2006

- First annual National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day held
- June 5 marks 25th anniversary of start of AIDS epidemic
- Treatment regimens further simplified?
- 15 microbicide candidates are in clinical trials
- CDC issues guidelines for use of HIV drugs to prevent HIV transmission following sexual or drug-using exposure
- 17.5 million women worldwide are living with HIV
- CDC reports over 1 million Americans are living with HIV/AIDS; women account for 29% of new HIV diagnoses each year