



## ABORIGINAL INJECTION DRUG USERS ARE MORE LIKELY THAN NON-ABORIGINAL INJECTION DRUG USERS TO CONTRACT HIV

### BACKGROUND & METHOD

- More and more, injection drug use is a significant way in which HIV is spread from person to person. However, research shows that some injection drug users may be at greater risk than others for acquiring the AIDS virus.
- Researchers followed a group of nearly 2,500 injection drug users in Vancouver over a period of several years.

### QUICK FACT

*ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN VANCOUVER EXPERIENCE A HIGHER BURDEN OF HIV INFECTION THAN THE NON-ABORIGINAL POPULATION.*

### FINDINGS

- What the researchers found was that, among people who first enrolled in the study, 16% of non-Aboriginal people were HIV-positive, while 25% of Aboriginal people were infected with HIV.
- In addition, among people who were HIV-negative when they enrolled in the study, 18.5% of Aboriginal people were HIV-positive when tested two years after enrollment, while this number was only 9.5% for non-Aboriginal people.

### IMPLICATIONS

- These findings call for immediate action on the part of policymakers to address the overall health needs of people who inject illicit drugs and will require that policymakers work closely with the affected community to develop safe and culturally sensitive solutions.
- Addiction is primarily a health and social issue. To address the problems of addiction through increased law enforcement, while neglecting interventions that have proven to be effective, can only result in greater harm, especially among vulnerable members of our society.
- To effectively address the HIV epidemic as it affects Aboriginal people, culturally sensitive evidence-based strategies must be developed, with the full participation of Aboriginal people themselves.

Wood E, Montaner JSG, Li K, Zhang R, Barney L, Strathdee SA, Tyndall MW, Kerr T. **Burden of HIV infection among Aboriginal injection drug users in Canada.** *American Journal of Public Health*, 2008; 98(3): 515-519.

