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AIDS/HIV denialism: Patients' privacy rights

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AIDS/HIV DENIALISM:
Patients’ Privacy Rights
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Abstract
HIV is a sexually transmitted disease that develops into AIDS. There is no cure for it, only treatment. In this poster, we look at the pros and cons of disclosing this type of information. People who decide to disclose their HIV status may have various reasons for doing so, but most do it for emotional support and for prevention of spreading the disease. Those who decide to keep it private primarily do it to not face rejection, discrimination, degradation, and loss of respect. (Patronio Page 72) The problem with creating a public database is that many organizations are against the idea of disclosing personal information. Through documents and as old as the Constitution, government officials have deemed a public database to be unethical. It conflicts with individuals’ basic rights. Others still argue that creating such a database would lower the spread of HIV, saving hundreds of lives. The balance between patient’s privacy and the well being of society has yet to be found. We want to prevent the spreading of AIDS, so disclosure should be mandatory. By knowing who has the disease the chances of spreading it become minimal. In exchange, patients should be treated just as any other person.

Introduction
HIV/AIDS weakens a person’s ability to fight off infections and cancer, thus creating an extremely weak body that is susceptible to many diseases. Because it is such a serious issue, the idea of creating a public database has been circulating. The database would be similar to a state’s sex offender registry. But along with the idea of publicizing AIDS victims have come many arguments. The main argument against the database is that it would go against patients privacy rights. Others argue it would cause public humiliation to the peoples infected, and possibly cause riots to break out against them. Although, the thought of innocent people being ridiculed over a virus is unfortunate, the fact that these people may be spreading HIV to unaware citizens is even more unfortunate. That is why some believe that taking the risk of public humiliation of victims is worth the possibility of lowering the spread of the fatal virus. This forces HIV and gay advocacy groups to confront the burning question: Which do you value more — your privacy or the chance to halt this plague? (Eskenzai Paragraph 1)

Pros of Public Database
Compiling a database of the infected makes it easier to track (and prevent) the spread of the disease. (Eskenzai Paragraph 2) The youth will be made more aware of the commonness of the HIV virus and how easily it can be spread. People will be aware if their partners are infected. (Emiet Page 4) It will possibly lower the possibility of people spreading the disease with a criminal intent. It is the public’s responsibilities to use data for social goods. (Gostin Paragraph 2)

Cons of Public Database
Person with HIV is “discriminatable” and becomes “discriminated” through disclosure. (Patronio Page 71) Results in loss of employment, housing, access to public education, insurance, and health care. (Patronio Page 72) Loss of friends, family, spouses, and the emotional and instrumental support those relationships might otherwise provide. (Patronio Page 72) Despite ‘duty to treat’ many providers prefer to avoid patients with HIV. (Patronio Page 76) Rejection of potential sexual partners. (Emiet Page 4) Potential risk of information being abused and used in ways not appreciated. (Emiet Page 4) Face anxiety over the potential of unintentional disclosure. (Emiet Page 5)

Conclusion
Since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, well over half a million people have died of AIDS in the United States. A virus as deadly as cancer should be given more extreme solutions. It may not be considered ethical in some eyes, but anyway of reducing the increase of peoples infected should be taken into consideration. Simply reinforcing safe behavior and urging HIV testing is not enough to end the epidemic. Yes, the thought of publicly humiliating individuals is terrible, but if severe measures are not taken, the HIV virus will continue to spread. And because the main ways to spread it are through unprotected sex and needle sharing, this means that youth are very much at risk. With young adults coming of age, ignorance, and going as extreme as a public database will more than likely open the eyes of teens who are engaging in these practices. AIDS is one of the most serious, deadly diseases in human history, and if a public database is what it takes to reduce the spread, then it should be attempted.

Bibliography


Number of people living with HIV, number of people newly infected with HIV and number of AIDS deaths in the world (Millions), 1990-2007 Source: <http://www.who.int/hiv/topics/mdg/info/en/index.html>