

## SYNOPSIS:

# HIV POSITIV : LIVING WITH AIDS

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**This report is part of a reflection on how people can live better together and therefore on how to improve our living conditions in a society that generates inequality and exclusion.**

In France, between 130 000 and 170 000 people are HIV positive and 27 000 live with AIDS. Tens of thousands of people should be concerned but don't know, while the disease continues to spread with an average of 6 500 new diagnosed HIV cases every year. HIV infection affects mainly people aged between 30 and 44 years old. More than half of the new cases diagnosed in 2007 involve heterosexuals. In France, the most affected Regions are Ile-de-France and Region PACA (Provence-Alps-Côte-d'Azur). Supporting in the mean 1 700 HIV patients, the European Hospital Georges Pompidou is one of the largest institutions dedicated to this medical support.

Above all HIV-AIDS is men, women and children living with this incurable disease. Although combination therapies appeared nearly 10 years ago, some of them have collapsed. Others continue to live in more or less good health conditions.

Nearly 30 years after the discovery of HIV, some ideas, taboos and misconceptions persist. Risk-taking is real. Discrimination is still very high as well: about 54.2% of those who are infected have felt discriminated (1). A situation that can lead to isolation and to an unacceptable concealment: 52% hide their HIV status to their families (2).

In this context, what does it mean today to live with and against HIV/AIDS from the point of view of patients and the medical staff? With as a common thread relationships and an unequal battle for life with its difficulties and failures, hopes, victories and projects.

## **THE REPORT, THE ISSUES**

- Fight against silence, confinement, preconceptions, concealment that surround the disease.
- Become aware of the sanitary, social, physical, psychological realities which people living with HIV undergo, and realize that HIV/AIDS can potentially affect anyone.
- Understand why discrimination persists against people living with HIV.
- Promote the need of a comprehensive, qualified care, threatened today by the reorganization of different services, and the involvement of a medical team that support the patient.

## HOW?

- By combining a photo report to excerpts of many witnesses or information in order to humanize the subject, set it into its reality, create a stronger relationship with those who will discover this work by echoing situations that can be similar to the ones they have experienced.
- By giving the opportunity to talk to those who remain silent: people living with HIV who wished to keep anonymous, but also to medical staff.
- By focusing on the support to people living with HIV (monitoring consultations, assessments, day case hospital and short stays, interviews), with the help of the medical staff and the trust of the patients, without whom nothing would have been possible.

## WHY?

- Because we live together and therefore every individual, every life counts.
- Because all of the employers must join in the fight against exclusion.
- Because teachers should start a cross-cutting, practical dialogue on the disease; trade questions and answers with the youth; information and prevention.
- Because politicians have the duty to be engaged in public health issues.

## LANDMARKS

- HIV/AIDS is a virus that attacks the immune system and prevents it from defending itself.
- Treatments: they act on the virus reproduction in the body. They slow down and sometimes even stop the growth of the virus. Unfortunately it does not cure HIV.
- **Transmission:** HIV-AIDS is transmitted from one person to another through all forms of sex, blood and from a mother to her baby. It is not spread by shaking hands with an HIV positive person, drinking from the same glass of water or sharing the same toilets for example.
- 33.4 million people live with AIDS in 2008. 67% in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- There were nearly 2.7 million new viral infection patients in 2008.
- In 2008, 2 million people died from diseases related to AIDS.
- Nearly 30 million deaths since 1981. (3)

## OUTLOOKS

**Priorities are:** access to information, testing, monitoring and medical care for all, including women and children, particularly in poor and developing countries that are already dealing with serious sanitary, economic, political, social issues.

Prevention must remain in force in all countries in order to make people become aware of the seriousness of the disease. The change of mindsets on HIV/AIDS is essential so that everyone can live as any other in our society.