

# Providing Right Message and Information

## Monitoring

### Enhanced Promotion Around the Time of the HIV Testing Promotion Week and World AIDS Day, and Increased Numbers of Voluntary HIV Counseling and Testing

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HIV/AIDS measures in Japan have been implemented in accordance with the Prevention Guideline for Specific Infectious Diseases related to the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) (AIDS Prevention Guideline). Based on the guideline, which was revised on April 2006, efforts have recently been made for providing right message and information, as well as voluntary HIV counseling and testing systems, and for the rebuilding the medical care system, based on the division of roles between national and local governments.

Meanwhile, although the number of newly reported HIV cases and AIDS cases has remained at low level relative to other developed countries, it has nevertheless remained on an upward trend, and there are fears about spread of HIV infection in Japan. In particular, the number of AIDS cases for whom the AIDS symptoms appearing was the first sign that they had been infected with HIV, now make up approximately 30 percent of the total of reported HIV cases and reported AIDS cases. In order to prevent the onset of AIDS and to prevent the spread of infection by commencing treatment for HIV-infected persons at an early stage, it is important that they first be tested early on to determine the existence of the infection.

Free and anonymous HIV testing and counseling has been conducted in the past at public health centers, etc., and a trend has been that the number of voluntary HIV counseling and testing increases at around World AIDS Day on December 1 due to the effects of the promotion events being carried out throughout Japan at this time. In response to this, since FY 2006, "HIV Testing Promotion Week" was newly established for one week from June 1, six months prior to World AIDS Day, to also simulate interest in AIDS and to promote voluntary testing. During the HIV Testing Promotion Week, HIV/AIDS prevention and HIV testing systems were actively publicized, and initiatives to strengthen the testing systems in 70 local governments (prefectures, cities with established public health centers, special ward of Tokyo; hereinafter the same) were instigated, such as having nighttime testing, weekend testing and rapid testing at public health centers, in addition to their regular weekday daytime testing. As a result, the number of HIV tests across the nation increased by 90 percent from 2,047 during the same period in 2005 to 3,816 in 2006, and the number of counseling sessions similarly increased 50 percent from 1,988 to 2,902. Furthermore, as shown in Fig. 1, the number of testing and counseling also increased drastically for the month of June, and since then, the number of testing and counseling has remained above to the figures prior the HIV Testing Promotion Week.

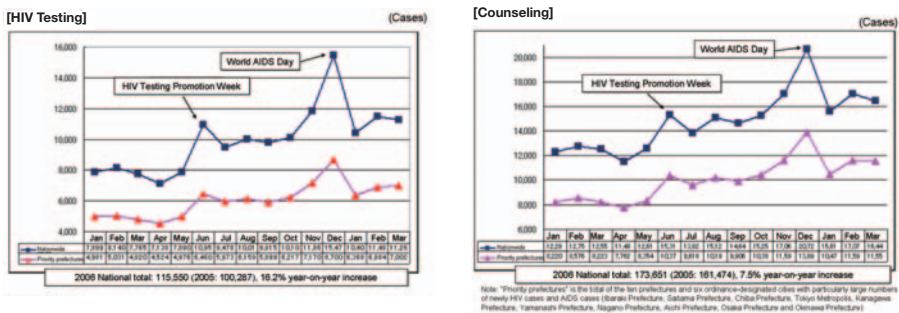


Fig. 1 Monthly Change in the Numbers of Voluntary HIV Counseling and Testing at Public Health Centers (Jan 2006-Mar 2007)

During the campaign for the 2006 World AIDS Day, there were the usual posters, commercials, a symposium and a street campaign. In addition, a live performance music event (RED RIBBON LIVE 2006) was also held featuring several well-known artists, and an online video feed of the event was broadcast in cooperation with Yahoo! JAPAN. Also, opportunities for testing were increased in 90 local governments in conjunction with activities for providing right message and information. On this occasion, 81 percent of prefectures conducted rapid testing, and there were other creative schemes implemented, including outsourcing the testing away from public health centers to downtown areas and other places with better access for people. As a result, the number of HIV testing increased by 26 percent, from 29,787 tests during the fourth quarter of 2005 to 37,449 tests during the fourth quarter of 2006; and the number of counseling sessions similarly increased by 12 percent, from 43,850 sessions to 49,132.

As shown in Fig. 2, ever since the second quarter, which included the HIV Testing Promotion Week, the number of HIV testing in 2006 has been higher than any of the past five years. In keeping with this trend, the number of reported HIV cases also increased: 198 in the first quarter of 2006, 248 in the second quarter, 233 in the third quarter, 235 in the fourth quarter, and 227 in the first quarter of 2007. In other words, since the second quarter, compared to the same periods for the previous years, the recorded numbers of cases in each period have been higher than at any time since the surveillance first began. Furthermore, the ratio of persons already showing symptoms of AIDS when first diagnosed as being infected with HIV, to reported HIV cases and AIDS cases changed from 31.7 percent (92 cases) in the first quarter of 2006 to 26.3 percent (81 cases) in the first quarter of 2007. In addition, according to a survey conducted by Yahoo! JAPAN, the percentage of people, who were aware that HIV testing was being done anonymously and for free, increased from 36.7 percent at the end of 2004, to 38.0 percent at the end of 2005, and then again to 66.7 percent at the end of 2006.

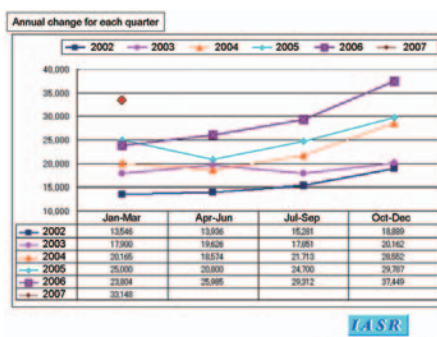


Fig. 2 Results of Voluntary Testing at Public Health Centers: Quarterly and Annual Comparison

Next we will compare prefectures by looking at the numbers of HIV testing and the ratios of persons already showing symptoms of AIDS when first diagnosed as being infected with HIV. In the Tokyo Metropolis and Osaka Prefecture, where the number of HIV testing is high, their respective ratios of persons already showing symptoms of AIDS when first diagnosed as being infected with HIV were 21.8 percent and 15.7 percent. In contrast, in neighboring prefectures, where the numbers of HIV tests is lower than Tokyo and Osaka, the ratios of persons already showing symptoms of AIDS when first diagnosed as being infected with HIV were between 40 and 50 percent.

The above suggests that promotions around the time of HIV Testing Promotion Week and World AIDS Day, together with initiatives to strengthen HIV testing systems, are linked to increasing the opportunities for HIV-positive persons learning that they are infected at an earlier stage. To prevent HIV-positive persons from missing opportunities to have medical services for early detection and treatment, there needs to be more right message and information that deepen the understanding of HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS prevention, there needs to be enhancement of medical service systems, and there needs to be further enhancement of voluntary HIV counseling and testing systems which are convenient for users (such as nighttime testing, weekend testing and rapid testing) and which take privacy into account.

The above was excerpted from "IASR 28: 163-164; June, 2007".