



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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Access to HIV testing and treatment key message on World AIDS Day 2017

For three decades, the global community has joined together on World AIDS Day – December 1 – to remember the millions of people who have died from the autoimmune disease, and to urge greater public awareness about HIV prevention.

According to UNAIDS, there were an estimated 36.7 million people around the world living with HIV, including a staggering 1.8 million newly infected HIV+ individuals, and about one million AIDS-related deaths in 2016.

Closer to home, the Public Health Agency of Canada began gathering data on the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) in 1985. Stats from 2014 reveal more than 65,000 Canadians were living with HIV, including nearly 17,000 women, which represents about 22 per cent of the national HIV/AIDS total.

AIDS organizations, policy decision-makers, scientists and researchers have worked tirelessly to stop the spread of the disease, encourage better access to HIV testing and treatment, and protect the human rights of those battling the disease.

But research suggests a high percentage of people don't even know they're infected with the virus, and are putting others' lives at risk. The Canadian government reports that 20 per cent of "people living with HIV in Canada are unaware of their HIV infection."

And that's why testing is key to HIV prevention.

Since December 1, 1988, HIV/AIDS activists have observed World AIDS Day by raising public awareness through research and education, fundraising initiatives, and anti-prejudice campaigns, like the Red Ribbon Campaign.

The red ribbon has become an international symbol of HIV/AIDS support and commitment to finding a cure for the virus that has claimed an estimated 35 million lives and infected 78 million people around the world.

That's why HEU continues to support the work of community organizations like Positive Living Society of British Columbia and the Stephen Lewis Foundation, who advocate for better education, support and care for those living with HIV, both at home and globally.

December 1, 2017