



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWSLETTER

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## “Getting to Zero” campaign launched on World AIDS Day – December 1

The theme of this year’s World AIDS Day – December 1 – is *Getting to Zero: zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, zero AIDS-related deaths*. It’s part of a five-year World AIDS Campaign initiative to lobby international governments to act now and provide access to medical treatment for all citizens of the world.

Since 1988, HIV/AIDS activists have observed World AIDS Day by raising public awareness through research and education, fundraising initiatives, and anti-prejudice campaigns. The red ribbon became an international symbol of HIV/AIDS support and a commitment to finding a cure for the virus that’s killed millions of people around the world.

It’s a day for nations to review international statistics, current issues and trends, rates of infection, innovative treatments, research funding, and prevention.

And December 1 is also a day to remember those who have died from the disease. Throughout the world, candlelight vigils are traditionally held to mourn the lives of those lost and to reaffirm government leaders’ commitment to continue funding.

It was 30 years ago that the first case of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) – the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) – was documented.

The face of HIV and AIDS has changed over the decades. Initially labeled the “gay men’s cancer” as HIV largely inflicted homosexual men, it soon became commonplace among injection drug-users and hemophiliacs receiving contaminated blood-products and transfusions. It soon spread to women and children – babies were often infected through their mother’s breast milk or in utero. And even senior citizens have been infected with HIV.

According to 2011 World Health Organization (WHO) statistics, there are currently 34.2 million people living with HIV in the world, including 3.4 million children (under the age of 15).

In 2011, there were 2.5 million new HIV diagnoses reported (including 330,000 children), and an estimated 1.7 million AIDS-related deaths (including 230,000 children).

In Canada, 2009 UNAIDS stats report 67,000 Canadians are living with HIV, including 14,000 women.

Visit Positive Living Society of British Columbia at <<http://www.positivelivingbc.org/>>.

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