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In Almaty, leading experts discussed innovations in the field of HIV

On November 26, an international scientific and practical conference "Innovative measures for HIV prevention and treatment: policy, research, practice" was held in Almaty. The conference was organized as part of a worldwide campaign dedicated to World AIDS Day on December 1 under the motto "Choose the right path – the path of human rights". Another significant occasion of the conference is the 35th anniversary of the organization of HIV services in Kazakhstan.

The organizers of the conference: the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kazakh Scientific Center of Dermatology and Infectious Diseases (KNCDIZ), the Association "Public Health". The conference was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Health, government and non-governmental organizations, international organizations - WHO, UNAIDS, USAID, CDC, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Among the participants are leading experts in the field of HIV infection from Belarus, Germany, Georgia, Denmark, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine.

On the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the organization of the HIV prevention service in Kazakhstan, the Minister of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan A. Sh. Alnazarova addressed the conference participants:

- Thanks to your work, Kazakhstan has made a significant contribution to the fight against HIV infection, becoming part of the global community striving to eradicate this threat. People living with HIV have received hope, help and support for a full and long life," the Minister noted.

Kazakhstan supported the UNAIDS Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS in 2021, aimed at accelerating efforts to combat HIV and end AIDS completely by 2030. Achieving the goals 95-95-95b of the Republic of Kazakhstan is:

- 82% of people living with HIV know their HIV status;

- 88% of all people diagnosed with HIV infection receive antiretroviral therapy;

- 90% of people who receive therapy have a suppressed viral load and cannot transmit the virus to others.

- The results of achieving the 95-95-95 goals in Kazakhstan are higher than in many countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The predominant route of HIV transmission in the country is sexual. At the beginning of 2024, 32,659 people living with HIV were registered in the republic. Last year, for the first time, there was a decrease in the rate of registration growth. Mother-to-child transmission of HIV decreased from 3.6% to 1.6%. The death rate from AIDS has decreased by a quarter. Kazakhstan has implemented all 12 preventive programs recommended by WHO, including the increasingly popular pre-exposure prophylaxis. Today, this method of prevention is used by more than 11 thousand people without HIV," said Ulugbek Medeubekov, Acting director of the CNDDIZ.

HIV infection in the country remains stable and under control. To strengthen the process, effective, in-depth educational work is needed, which can warn the population against possible infection and forms a culture of responsible attitude to their own health and the health of loved ones. It is necessary to expand preventive work in youth health centers, PHC, and private medical centers. Early detection of the disease is an important priority in the prevention and treatment of HIV infection. Regular HIV testing should become a fashionable trend, especially for young people.

In recent years, the country has seen a decrease in the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia. For more accurate statistics of these diseases, it is necessary to introduce a unified health information system for medical organizations, regardless of ownership forms. Syphilis and gonorrhea should be included in the list of socially significant diseases. To improve the quality of medical care to the population, there is a need to restore the network of regional skin and venereological dispensaries.

The conference became a fruitful platform for the exchange of experience and best practices in the field of prevention of HIV infection and dermatovenereological diseases. The discussions focused on the implementation of triple elimination (HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B) from mother to child, the development of successful interventions against stigma to key population groups, improving prevention and others. The participants discussed innovative approaches to HIV testing, the use of elements of social marketing, crowdsourcing, and interactive methods in schools in the prevention of HIV infection.

The participants noted that the conference was an important step towards improving modern approaches to the prevention of HIV and dermatovenereological diseases.

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