



Mother-to-Child HIV Transmission in the Latino Community

In 1999, 700,000 infants worldwide contracted the HIV virus from their mothers, including 200,000 from breastfeeding (AIDS Survival Project 2000). In the United States, over 20% of AIDS patients who acquire the disease from their mothers are Hispanic (CDC 2000). HIV -positive women have some options during pregnancy as long as they know that they have the HIV virus and have prenatal care available to them. For example, women who use the drug AZT throughout their pregnancies are two-thirds less likely to pass the disease on to their children (CDC 2000). Another drug, ZDV, reduces the infant's chances of contracting HIV from his mother to 7% (AIDS Survival Project 2000). Other preventative measures, such as having a Caesarian section during delivery, can potentially reduce the likelihood of mother-to-child transmission (AIDS Survival Project 2000).

Unfortunately, however, many Latina mothers do not receive the proper prenatal care. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages mothers to be tested for HIV once they become pregnant so that they can take the proper precautions should they be diagnosed HIV -positive (CDC 2000). Still, quality prenatal care and drugs such as AZT are expensive, and many new Latina mothers may not be able to afford them. Efforts to prevent mother-to-child transmission must include providing affordable quality prenatal care to Latina mothers. Also, preventative measures should include education for both Hispanic males and females about using condoms and avoiding drugs in order to keep future generations of parents from contracting HIV in the first place.

Helping HIV -positive Latina mothers receive affordable, quality prenatal care will help secure a healthy future for the newest members of the Latino community.